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Choice of
the Best
LP Recordings
for the year
of 1955



Fritz Reiner
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McDonough • Joseph W. Peckham
W. M. Rothman • Robert Shaw • Max
Schnitzer • Harold C. Schilling

The Arnold Bax Story

Editorial Notes

▲WE have been asked to assist the newly formed Arnold Bax Society to achieve its first aim—the sponsoring of a major work by the composer (probably one of his later symphonies). Though first appeals in England have met with good response, the Society is in need of many more members if such a recording venture is to be an economic proposition. The prospectus of this Society reads as follows: "The Arnold Bax Society has been formed by a group of persons who wish to honor the memory of Sir Arnold Bax, late Master of the Queen's Music. The Society considers that one of the best ways it can do this is by sponsoring some good quality long playing records of the major works of Bax. Membership of the Society can be gained by sending a written promise to buy one or more copies of the first record to be sponsored by the Society. Members are asked to say whether they would be willing to buy subsequent records and to suggest works for recording. It is expected that the records will be issued at the current price of high quality LP records. The Society will insist on authentic performances and high technical standards. Please write to—Clifford W. Gillam, Downview, Kings Barn Lane, Steyning, Sussex, England."

The Society has the blessings of Jan Sibelius, who has consented "gratefully and wholeheartedly" to be its president, and also twenty-one leading men in the music world as vice-presidents, among others, conductors Barbirolli, Boult, Cameron, Sargent and Schwarz, and composers Bliss, Ireland, Rubbra, Vaughan Williams and Walton.

It seems to us, in this day and age with the sponsoring of so much unknown and otherwise problematical music on LP, that a Society for Arnold Bax would not be necessary. Surely, the big record companies in England should be willing to sponsor some of this composer's finer works. Boult, in an orchestral program of English music (London LL-1169), has perhaps already awakened interest in this composer with his performance of the tone poem, *Tintagel*, in which "impression and emotion have been translated into music." Barbirolli in the final days of 78-rpm recordings performed the *Third Symphony*, which might well sustain an LP re-issue. Bax sought to conjure musical dreams from legends and was most successful in his tone poems. Some of his chamber music is of rare poetic beauty—such as his *Nonet* and his *Sonata for Harp and Viola*. Your editor, for one, would like to possess these works on LP and also Bax's evocative motet, *Mater ora Filium*. There is a recording of an attractive *Quintet for Harp and Strings* performed



A candid shot of the Editor, balanced on a thumb, taken at a rehearsal.

by Laura Newell and the Stuyvesant String Quartet (Philharmonia PH-102) which might help to enlist interest in the Bax Society. (On the same disc is an atmospheric quintet for harp and string quartet by Malipiero, well worth knowing.) If the fact that all members of the staff of this magazine will be interested in joining the Bax Society means anything to our readers, we announce it herewith so that many will hasten to enlist themselves in this worthy venture.

A Happy New Year to all.

Horowitz Discovers Clementi

CLEMENTI: *Sonatas—Op. 14, No. 3; Op. 26, No. 2 and Op. 34, No. 2; Vladimir Horowitz (piano). RCA Victor LM-1902, \$3.98.*

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▲NOW that the biggest of the "big name" pianists has made it official, it may be stated with reasonable assurance that posterity is about to make amends to Muzio Clementi (1752-1832), precursor of Beethoven and otherwise a vastly more significant figure than the historians have led us to believe. The trouble has been that they docilely accepted the "mere mechanic" judgment pronounced by Mozart, who was notoriously unfair in appraising his co-professionals, instead of consulting the evidence for themselves. Now, Beethoven's slender library was all but dominated by Clementi volumes and we may infer that he esteemed the older man's style. Indeed, he took it for himself, as any interested party may confirm by listening herewith and then noting the dates of composition. But alas, as Arthur Loesser remarks, Beethoven "uttered no quotable winged word on the subject; and dissenting German admirers of Clementi were left no potent implement with which they might defend their hero. . ."

I am at a loss to explain how so much time has elapsed without Clementi's getting at least a modicum of his due, just the same. The music has been available all along. Lili Kraus and Vera Franceschi have recorded four of the sonatas each. Artur Balsam did one also. Now comes Horowitz with three more. Hear any of them and dare to claim that they are not prophetic of Beethoven, not to mention Chopin and Schumann. The latter two had not yet been born when Beethoven published his first sonatas in 1796—by which year some 46 of Clementi's were in print. Where else did the fledgling titan acquire his "characteristic" ways if not from the likes of the Clementi *Op. 14, No. 3*, written when Beethoven was in his early teens and later to be remembered by him in his own *Op. 31, No. 3* and even in the *Eroica*? And where else did the opening of the *Pathétique* come from if not from Clementi's *Op. 34, No. 2*? Not only rhythmically and harmonically but also melodically, it is clear, Clementi was the victim of imitation by flattery on the part of the most famous of all composers.

That should be grounds enough to warrant your exploring the small but choice Clementi discography. Horowitz is more persuasive than was Kraus (the Franceschi recital I have not heard) because he has the fingers with which to communicate his zeal. At this moment, furthermore, I am bound to say that for me these performances represent his supreme interpretative achievement. The publicity blurbs tell us that he only recently discovered Clementi and has since determined to be his prophet. The implication withal is that Horowitz is the hero. In his playing, happily, he is for once content to feature the composer. The recorded sound is fairly alive wity presence. Do not miss this disc for any reason.

—J.L.

Critics' Choice of the Best LPs of 1955

OUR REVIEWERS' list of the best recordings of 1955 is once again larger than that of the previous year. The ever-increasing spawn of LP proves that the phonograph has become a significant adjunct to the American home. As we have previously observed, music has many facets and the realm of LP is a boundless domain, wherein time-honored and well known names as well as new or unfamiliar ones are encountered among composers and artists.

As you browse through this list, we again hope that you will be stimulated to investigate unbeaten paths. The true music listener—or music lover if you prefer—is adventuresome, seeking new vistas in all worlds of music and being receptive to new artists. Not all of the great performers on records have come to our country yet; many who are worthy of our respect are still in Europe, as those of us who are not hidebound by publicity and personal appearances are well aware. It is with this in mind that we have included with this year's list a short resume of our original reviews. The critics represented have long been immersed in and identified with the survey of record music from the standpoints of performance and reproduction. Many have been active for the past 20 years, and have lived with recorded music knowingly and sympathetically.

For convenience the list has been arranged in various categories, so that the prospective buyer can make his selections accordingly. The majority of these recordings are first-rate examples of modern engineering. Others, however, are recommended because of outstanding artistic merits.

ORCHESTRA

BARTOK: *Concerto for Orchestra*; Ormandy, Phila. Orch. Columbia ML-4973.

▲HERE is a stunning account of Bartok's modern classical masterpiece for orchestra in a recording so unusually fine that one may expect to hear it at audio expositions. —C.J.L.

BARTOK: *Music for Strings, Percussion & Celesta*; **KODALY:** *Hary Janos—Suite*; Solti, London Phil. Orch. London LL-1230.

▲ALTHOUGH there have been other fine versions of these vivid scores, these command the attention of the record buyer. Here we have idiomatic, sensitive, vivid performances, impeccably recorded. —R.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 4, Op. 60; Symphony No. 8, Op. 93*; Perlea, Vienna State Philharmonic. Vox PL-8740.

▲A real sleeper, in every way. First, the recording is ideal; second, the direction shows taste, style, and an unusual care for the printed score; third, the playing is outstanding for this Viennese orchestra. —C.J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 6, Op. 68*; Paray, Detroit Sym. Orch. Mercury MG-50045.

▲THE music-making is of a very high order and I do not hesitate to recommend your sampling this disc before choosing your *Pastoral*. Mercury sound is slightly too magnificent for its own good. —J.L.

BEETHOVEN: *Five Piano Concertos*; Schnabel, Sargent, London Sym. & London Phil. Orchestras. Victor LCT-6700.

▲THESE Schnabel recordings were made back in 1932, '33 and '35. That there are other pianists who have identified themselves with these works remains an irrefutable fact, but the memory of a great artist of our own time should not be permitted

to fade away. I would not part with these recordings, as old as they are. —P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Violin Concerto, Op. 61*; Milstein, Steinberg, Pittsburgh Sym. Orch. Capitol P-8313.

▲I would place this 19th version with the very best, and for unalloyed loveliness of sound I would place it well ahead of anything on the market. —J.L.

BERLIOZ: *Symphonie fantastique*; Munch, Boston Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1900.

▲MUNCH has made this work a specialty since coming to this country, but never more successfully than here. This performance is presented with a degree of control that leaves one breathless, and is furthermore characterized by an unusual fidelity to Berlioz's indications. Thrilling sound. —C.J.L.

BLISS: *Music for Strings; Miracle in the Gorbals*; Bliss, Philharmonia Orch. Angel 35136.

▲RECOMMENDED for the *Music for Strings*—a rich textured score, devised with unfailing skill—beautiful and vigorous. Excellent performance and recording. —P.H.R.

BLOCH: *Voice in the Wilderness; Schelomo*; Zara Nelsova (cello), Ansermet, London Phil. Orch. London LL-1232.

▲VOICE in the Wilderness is Bloch's greatest orchestral work, which Nelsova and Ansermet perform with poetic vehemence and conviction. *Schelomo* was well played by Rose and Mitropoulos (Columbia) and Janigro and Rodzinski (Westminster) but with less attractive disc mates. All are excellently recorded. —P.H.R.

BORODIN: *Symphony No. 2; TCHAIKOVSKY:* *Suite No. 1, Op. 43*; Mitropoulos, Phil. Sym. Orch. Columbia ML-4966.

▲MITROPOULOS makes more of these scores than any of his competitors. Nobody infuses the music of the Borodin with quite so much life as he. Fine sound. —J.L.

BRAHMS: *Piano Concerto No. 1, Op. 15*; Rubinstein, Reiner, Chicago Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1831.

▲THE performance is a miracle of massive virtuosity. The sound is excellent. —J.L.

BRAHMS: *Violin Concerto, Op. 77*; Johanna Martzy, Kletzki, Philharmonia Orch. Angel 35137.

▲THIS amazing young Hungarian artist has fire, taste, the grace of a gazelle, the power of a tigress, and the best intonation in the distaff department since Morini. Kletzki is deferent, but not obsequious, and the sound is excellent. —J.L.

DVORAK: *Cello Concerto, Op. 104*; Navarra, Schwarz, New Sym. Orch. of London. Capitol P-8301.

▲THE balance between soloist and orchestra is excellent. Navarra gives a polished, forceful performance that endures comparison with Casals'. —J.L.

DVORAK: *Symphony No. 4, Op. 88*; Swallisch, Philharmonia Orch. Angel 35214.

▲SWALLISCH not only infuses the music with far more zest than others who have performed it on LP, but also he secures a more virtuoso performance. The sonic quality of the finished product has to be heard to be believed. —J.L.

DEBUSSY: *La Mer; Iberia*; Toscanini, NBC Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1833.

▲THE new issue of Toscanini's *La Mer*, to celebrate his long awaited performance of *Iberia*, involves reproductive enhancement of the former. Toscanini in these scores conjures evocative sounds and supple radiance unlike any other conductor. RCA's "New Orthophonic" sound is wonderfully realistic. —P.H.R.

ELGAR: *Falstaff, Op. 68*; Collins, London Sym. Orch. London LL-1011.

▲ELGAR'S absorption with Shakespeare's *Henry the Fourth* and more particularly Sir John Falstaff resulted in one of his greatest works. Collins performs it to the manner born, with recognition of the true Elgar nobility which is ever present. It is a revelation to hear this music in a modern recording which brings out so many details. —P.H.R.

FALLA: *Harpsichord Concerto*; **SURINACH:** *Tientos*; **RIETI:** *Partita*; Sylvia Marlowe, Concert Art Players. Capitol P-8309.

▲THE Falla work is one of his greatest scores and the reason for recommending this disc. Miss Marlowe's performance is the best version on LP. The other works make for an agreeable program, especially Rieti's clever neo-classical *Partita*. Excellent recording. —P.H.R.

GEMINIANI: *Six Concerti Grossi, Op. 6*; Scherchen, English Baroque Orch. Westminster WN-18002.

▲THE musical and intellectual aspects of Scherchen's artistry are richly set forth in these early 18th-century works by an Italian composer who was a master at technical subtleties, a fact that Scherchen fully appreciates which makes his renditions more illuminating experiences than a previous issue of these works. Lifelike recording. —P.H.R.

HOMAGE TO DIAGHILEV—The Music of his Famous Ballets. Markevitch, Philharmonia Orch. Angel 35153.

▲THIS handsome set, dedicated to the memory of Serge de Diaghilev, marks the 25th anniversary of the great patron's death and the collapse of his tremendously influential ballet company. Markevitch is a trustworthy musical spirit, the Philharmonia a fine orchestra, and Angel (with this set) a new force in the art of recording. —C.J.L.

GLUCK: *Flute Concerto*; **PERGOLESI:** *Flute Concerto*; **BOCCHERINI:** *Flute Concerto*; Wanasek, Pro Musica Orch. of Vienna with Adler or Gielen. Vox PL-9440.

▲THESE works are charmers, however short of masterpiece status they may fall, and open-minded listeners will do themselves a disservice if they do not sample this disc. Good sound. —J.L.

FALLA: *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*; **RODRIGO:** *Guitar Concerto*; Soriano (in Falla), Argenta, Madrid Cham. Orch., Yepes (in Rodrigo). London International TW-91019.

▲SORIANO and Argenta evoke a magic of their own unlike any other performers I have heard in the Falla score. Soundwise, this issue is extraordinarily beautiful as well as realistic. The Rodrigo concerto is lightweight, but diverting, and should appeal to those who like the guitar. Yepes is a gifted performer. —P.H.R.

HANDEL: *Concerti Grossi, Op. 6*; Scherchen, the English Baroque Orch. Westminster WAL-403. **The Same**; Boyd Neel String Orch. London LLA-21.

▲SUFFICE it to say on ample earlier evidence that the Scherchen performances are easily the most interesting and edifying of the lot, even if they are not uncomplicatedly traditional as are those of Boyd Neel, or full to overflowing with Handellian love and lilt as the older Busch's are. The Westminster sound is excellent, but different curves seem to obtain from side to side. London's engineering is expert indeed. —J.L.

HINDEMITH: *Symphony—Die Harmonie der Welt*; Hindemith, Berlin Phil. Orch. Decca DL-9765.

▲INTELLECTUALLY and polemically, this work is a masterpiece. As music, I am bound to report, it sounds like *Mathis der Maler* all over again but somewhat more diffuse. The performance is impressive, the sound satisfactory. —J.L.

HIVELY: *Tres Himnos*; **PORTER:** *Poem and Dance*; **DONOVAN:** *New England Chronicle*; Hanson, Eastman-Rochester Sym. Orch. Mercury MG-40013.

▲RARELY have I felt the joy of discovery so keenly as I did with the first playing of Hively's tender homage to Mexico. The more familiar Porter and Donovan works are welcome, the latter being, for all its programmatic overtones, a masterpiece of contemporary musical abstraction. The performances are splendid, the reproductive quality as nearly perfect as it is currently possible to achieve. —J.L.

KODALY: *Marosszek Dances*; *Psalmus Hungaricus*; Haefliger (tenor), Choirs, Fricisay, RIAS Sym. Orch. of Berlin. Decca DL-9773.

▲MUSICALLY, if not soundwise, this *Psalmus Hungaricus* is the finest of the lot. All of the conductor's forces are first rate. I have always had a fondness for the *Marosszek Dances* which, I trust, will now be shared by others. —J.L.

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 1*; Walter, Phil. Sym. Orch. Columbia SL-218. *The Same*; Kubelik, Vienna Phil. Orch. London LL-1107.

▲BOTH of these performances are deserving of much praise; both are smoothly played by fine orchestras, and both are conducted by musicians with sympathetic insight into Mahler's music. Preference will be governed by personal taste. One Mahler enthusiast regards Vox's performance of this work by Horenstein as the best, but Horenstein does not have as fine an orchestra at his command. —P.H.R.

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 8*; Soloists, the combined Rotterdam Choirs and Rotterdam Phil. Orch. Epic set SC-6004.

▲AS a recording, the Epic release is certainly far from ideal, yet it is already miles ahead of the Columbia release, because it is always beautiful in sound. Nothing was spared to make this performance a worthy one. The total ensemble is 1,100. —J.D.

MENDELSSOHN: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Soloists, chorus, Kletzki, Philharmonia Orch. Angel 35146.

▲THE singing is lovely, the sound on a par with Angel's best, and the ensemble playing under Kletzki a thoroughgoing pleasure. —J.L.

MOZART: *Piano Concerto No. 14, K. 449*; *Serenata Notturna, K. 239*; *Six Nocturni for voices and woodwinds, K. 436/9, K. 346, K. 549*; Scherzer (piano), Soloists, Haas, London Baroque Ensemble. Decca DL-9776.

▲BEST performance of the concerto I have heard on records. The little *Nocturni* for voices and woodwinds are a delight. Good sound. —J.L.

MOZART: *Symphony No. 36, K. 425 (Linz)* and *Rehearsals of same*; Walter, Columbia Sym. Orch. Columbia set SL-224.

▲IN these days, Walter's Mozart is something special and very lovely indeed, even though we may prefer a different approach. This version of the "Linz" symphony is something unusual with the three record-sided rehearsals in which we are given an insight into Walter's benevolence of method and spirit. The recording is realistic but somewhat heavy in the bass for Mozart. There are inner lines, heard in the rehearsal records, that do not stand out in the symphony performance. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Serenade No. 4, K. 203*; Maag, New Sym. Orch. of London. London LL-1206.

▲THE performance is graceful and well proportioned, with the requisite style. The recorded sound is clean and bright. —R.R.

NIELSEN: *Symphony No. 5, Op. 50*; *Maskarade—Overture*; Jensen, Danish State Radio Sym. Orch. London LL-1143.

▲NIELSEN'S *Fifth Symphony* is undoubtedly his greatest work. While in many ways a complex score, it grips the imagination with its dramatic puissance and its quiet poetic philosophizing. It is wonderfully performed. The recording is brilliantly realistic in dynamics and clear in detail. —P.H.R.

PROKOFIEV: *Violin Concerto No. 1, Op. 19*; **LALO:** *Symphonie Espagnole*; Milstein, Golschmann, St. Louis Sym. Orch. Capitol P-8303.

▲THE Prokofiev is one of Milstein's specialties. On the present evidence, he now owns the work. So pellucid is the soloist's traversal, so sympathetic is Golschmann's collaboration, that one hears the music as if one never really had heard it before. As to the Lalo, I am frank to say that I prefer Campoli's complete version for its truly idiomatic rapport. But Milstein is silken smooth and quite the equal of any other version. The sound is superb. —J.L.

PROKOFIEV: *Chout—Ballet Suite, Op. 21a*; *Lieutenant Kije—Suite, Op. 60*; Horenstein, Paris Phil. Orch. Vox PL-9180.

▲HERE is an idiomatic performance of *Chout*, brimming over with mirth, mischief and mayhem. The conductor is to be commended for including the portions of the score that have never been recorded before, as well as for the engaging performance. As a filler we have a colorful rendition of the composer's suite from the film, *Li Kie*. The orchestral sound is bright and glittering. —R.R.

RACHMANINOV: *Symphony No. 3, Op. 44*; Ormandy, Phila. Orch. Columbia ML-4961.

▲ORMANDY has always been sympathetic to the music of Rachmaninov and he gives a fine performance of this work. The recording is rich and glowing in tonal qualities. —P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Daphnis et Chloe*; Munch, Boston Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1893.

▲THE Ansermet performance of this score was notable for leadership; the Dorati for good sound. The new Munch version has both virtues in abundance and should stand as the definitive one for years. —C.J.L.

RAVEL: *La Valse*; **FAURE:** *Pavanne, Op. 50*; **FRANCK:** *Psyche—Symphonic Poem*; Paray, Detroit Sym. Orch. Mercury 50029.

▲PARAY'S performance of *La Valse* is the best on LP—technically better controlled and infused with more dramatic life. It is exceptionally well engineered with the Mercury technique achieving the widest tonal and dynamic range. Paray brings poetic elegance to Faure's lovely *Pavanne*, and his excerpts from Franck's *Psyche* are above reproach. —P.H.R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Sheherazade, Op. 35*; Ansermet, Paris Cons. Orch. London LL-1162.

▲ANSERMET'S performance of this work has been justly praised through the years. His earlier version has been one of the most sought-after renditions. The new one puts most other versions in the shade with its almost unbelievably realistic sound. —R.R.

ROUSSEL: *Petite Suite, Op. 39*; *Concerto for Small Orch., Op. 34*; *Sinfonietta for String Orch., Op. 32*; *Piano Concerto, Op. 36*; Gousseau (piano), Sacher, Lamoureux Concerts Orch. Epic LC-3129.

▲ALL of Roussel's best short works—beautifully performed on a single disc—what else need be said? Sacher limns everything with sympathetic intellectuality. The sound is a bit bass-heavy but on the whole quite satisfactory. Highly recommended. —J.L.

SCHUMANN: *Symphony No. 4, Op. 120*; **WAGNER:** *Siegfried Idyll*; Cantelli, Philharmonia Orch. Victor LHMV-13.

▲THE Schumann is a swift, full-blooded, impassioned view of the score, performed note-perfect and in accordance with the composer's direction. Cantelli breathes sweet warmth into every phrase of Wagner's touching poem on domestic bliss. Excellent recording. —C.J.L.

MUSIC OF JOHANN & JOSEF STRAUSS: Krauss, Vienna Phil. Orch. London set LL-1028/29.

▲LIKE the true Viennese he was, Krauss loved the music of the Strauss family and played it from the heart. This set is a cherishable souvenir of the conductor. Soundwise quite impressive. —J.N.

STRAUSS, Richard: *Till Eulenspiegel*; *Tod und Verklarung*; Toscanini, NEC Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1891.

▲THE Maestro's *Death and Transfiguration* was an interpretative wonder and this belated preservation of it is more than welcome. His *Till* is equally welcome, though his satiric treatment is not as deft as some others'. Excellent sound, considering that the tapes date from 1952. —J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *L'Histoire du Soldat—Suite*; *Octet for Wind Instruments*; Soloists; *Symphonies for Wind Instruments*; Stravinsky, N. W. German Radio Orch. Col. ML-4964.

▲AUTHORITATIVE performances—Stravinsky's direction has never been more poised or assured. *L'Histoire* and the *Octet* will appeal more to listeners than the *Symphonies*. The recording is a feather in Columbia's hat; so, indeed, is the entire project. —C.J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *L'Histoire du Soldat*; Soloists, Vardi and Instrumental Ensemble. Vox PL-8990.

▲NOW at last we have a complete *L'Histoire* with spoken text in English, which is reason enough to welcome this disc with open arms. The sound is Vox's studio best, and Vardi does a thoroughly workmanlike job. —J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka—Suite*; *Le Sacre du printemps*; Ormandy, Phila. Orch. Columbia ML-5030.

▲THE interpretations are straightforward, but the requisite sense of destination always is present, and the sheer execution is a marvel of ensemble virtuosity. The sound is gorgeous. —J.L.

STRAVINSKY: *Petrouchka* (complete); Scherchen, Phil. Sym. Orch. of London. Westminster W-LAB-7011.

▲THIS is the finest disc that Westminster has issued in its Lab series. The sound is marvelously detailed, clean, sparkling, and spacious. I cannot think of another modern score that Scherchen has presented so triumphantly. This disc must stand as the preferred version with more of *Petrouchka* pleasingly displayed than elsewhere. —C.J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Swan Lake Ballet* (complete); Dorati, Min. Sym. Orch. Mercury set OL-3-102.

Sleeping Beauty Ballet, Op. 66 (complete); Dorati, Minn. Sym. Orch. Mercury set OL-3-103.

▲IN both these recordings, Dorati has earned the gratitude of all admirers of Tchaikovsky's great ballet scores. For unusual distinctness of timbre and an illusion of faithful dynamic shading, these recordings are ahead of all others. —C.J.L.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 5, Op. 64*; Westminster W-LAB-8001. *Symphony No. 6, Op. 74*; Westminster WN-18048. Rodzinski, Phil. Sym. Orch. of London.

▲RODZINSKI'S *Fifth* is worth every penny of its premium price (Lab series), on grounds sonic and otherwise. Certain liberties notwithstanding, I am more deeply touched with this *Pathetique* than any other on LP. Fine engineering. —J.L.

VIVALDI: *Four Concerti, Vol. 2*. Decca DL-9697. *Four Concerti, Vol. 3*. Decca DL-9684. Virtuosi di Roma. Fasano (cond.). *Five Concerti*. Angel 35087. I Musici.

ed, impassionate-perfect direction. Every phrase is a masterpiece of bliss. —C.J.L.

TRAUSS: Concerto for Piano and Orchestra. Victor.

... loved the recording of the concerto of the Virtuosi di Roma. —J.N.

... Tod und Nacht. Victor.

... tion was an excellent reservation. It is equally as good as considering —J.L.

... dat—Suile; ...insky with ...struments; ...rch. Col.

...travinsky's ...or assured. ...to listeners ...a feather in ...ire project. —C.J.L.

...; Soloists; ...Vox PL.

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...minster has ...marvelously ...I cannot ...herchen has ...must stand ...Petrouchka —C.J.L.

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...penny of its ...s sonic and ...nding, I am ...ne than any —J.L.

...ca DL-9697. ...4. Virtuosi ...certi. Angel

▲THESE three programs of Vivaldi concerti are exceptionally fine. The best performances are those of the Virtuosi di Roma, an unexcelled group in music of the Baroque and early classical periods. I Musici are a competent group, who play without a conductor, but they do not have the same unanimity, polish or subtle coloration of the Virtuosi di Roma. The genius of Vivaldi never ceases to astound, especially when performers have fine musicianship, vitality and tonal beauty. The recording sound serves the ensembles well, especially the mellowness of tone in the Virtuosi programs. —P.H.R.

VIVALDI: Concerto for Oboe; **CORELLI:** Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 4; **CLEMENTI:** Symphony in D, Op. 18, No. 2; Virtuosi di Roma. Victor LHMV-2.

▲THE feature of this disc is the symphony by Clementi, who has been called the Italian Mozart. It has real musical interest, especially as performed by this chamber group under its gifted conductor. No group does greater justice to Vivaldi and Corelli, in our estimation, so these added performances are welcome. Here, the recording is brighter than in the Decca discs but with a greater tenseness which serves Clementi best. —P.H.R.

WAGNER: Overture—The Flying Dutchman; Apprentices' Dance and Procession—Die Meistersinger; Good Friday Spell—Parsifal; Rhine Journey and Funeral Music—Goetterdaemmerung. Beecham, Royal Phil. Orch. Columbia ML-4962. ▲BEECHAM always did have a way with Die Meistersinger, and his Flying Dutchman also is excellent. This is a lot of music for its price, and all of it royally turned out. —J.L.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: 8 Sonatas for Flute & Harpsichord; John Wummer & Fernando Valenti. Westminster set WAL-216.

▲WUMMER'S tonal warmth and forthright musical playing and Valenti's fine work at the harpsichord place this set in front of previous LP issues. Excellent sound. —P.H.R.

BLOCH: Four String Quartets; Griller String Quartet. London set LLA-23.

▲BLOCH, in his string quartets, gives us an insight into his spiritual thinking as well as his dominant emotional powers. His relationship to Beethoven has been discussed at some length by various writers—both have strong individuality and intensity of feeling and depth of sorrow. The Griller Quartet have longed played these works in public and they do notable justice to each, though Nos. 1 and 2 are available elsewhere in equally fine performances. —P.H.R.

BLOCH: Violin Sonata; **HANDEL:** Sonata No. 6; **SCHUBERT:** Sonatina, Op. 137, No. 3; Heifetz & Bey. Victor LM-1861.

▲THOSE who knew and valued the earlier Victor 78-rpm recording of the Bloch will join us in gratitude to Heifetz for having taken such pains to do new justice to this moving masterpiece. The strange bedfellows are attired in the usual silk and satin of the Heifetz treatment. The sound is brilliant. —J.L.

BLOCH: Quintet for Piano & Strings; Johanna Harris, Walden String Quartet. MGM-E3229.

▲DESPITE its uncompromising characteristics, this work is more or less rhapsodic throughout with much emotional variety and rhythmic vitality. This is a strong work that asks for a more vital approach than a previous issue provided. These players provide the more passionate energy which rightfully belongs in this strong opus—one of Bloch's greatest chamber works. With clearer and fuller reproduction, this issue serves the music most advantageously. —P.H.R.

BRUCKNER: String Quintet in F; Koeckert Qt. with Schmid (viola). Decca DL-9796.

▲THOSE who find the Bruckner symphonies too rich for their stomachs are urged to expose them-

selves to this more palatable and decidedly more protein repast. The performance is loving, the sound the best. —J.L.

CHAUSSON: Concerto in D for Violin, Piano & String Qt. Francescatti, Casadesu, Guilet Quartet. Columbia ML-4998.

▲A wonderful performance, excellently recorded. —P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: Sonata for Flute, Viola & Harp; **Syrinx;** **ROUSSEL:** Trio for Flute, Viola & Cello, Op. 40; Julius Baker (flute), Lillian Fuchs (viola), Laura Newell (harp), Harry Fuchs (cello). Decca DL-9777.

▲THE Debussy is a praiseworthy artistic achievement. The recording has an atmospheric charm wherein the players are blended to perfection. The Roussel is a little masterpiece—delicate, poetic and imaginative, to which the players do equal justice. Fine recording. —P.H.R.

FAURE: Quintet No. 2, Op. 115; Gaby Casadesu and Guilet String Quartet. MGM-E3166.

▲THIS is a beautiful work in which ardor is tempered like that of a poet or painter who favors subtlety, and yet it has its vitality and endless spontaneity. The performance is an expressive one. The recording is excellent though intimate in sound. —P.H.R.

HANDEL: 10 Flute Sonatas; Wummer & Valenti. Westminster set WAL-218.

▲THE same remarks prevail here as in the Bach Flute Sonatas above.

HAYDN: Trios Nos. 29, 30, 31; Veyron-Lacroix (piano), Rampal (flute), Huchot (cello). L'Oiseau-Lyre OL-50036.

▲THESE flute trios are dreams of loveliness, played with more rapid tempi than a previous issue in which the violin was used instead of the flute. This recording takes the honors for real chamber intimacy of sound. —J.L.

HINDEMITH: Cello Sonata, Op. 11, No. 3; **BARTOK:** Rhapsody No. 1; **WEINER:** Lakodalmas; Starker (cello) & Pommers (piano). Period SPL-715.

▲THE Hindemith and Bartok pieces are standard repertoire and ever welcome. The Weiner, transcribed from his Serenade for Orchestra, simulates a Hungarian wedding. Another feast for fans of Starker, who plays magnificently. Fine sound. —J.L.

THE JAPANESE KOTO: Imperial Court Music; Sinichi Yuize. Cook Labs. 1132.

▲THERE is a haunting loveliness in the tinkle of the koto, which in this case is a six-foot instrument with 13 silk strings of 130 tightly woven strands each. This is one of the enterprising Emory Cook's most exciting—and by all odds his most charming—experiment in exotic sound. Don't miss it. —J.L.

MILHAUD: La Cheminee du Roi Rene; Deux Esquisses; **IBERT:** Trois Pieces Breves; **HINDEMITH:** Kleine Kammermusik, Op. 24, No. 2; Wind Quintet of the Orch. Natl. de la Radiodiffusion Francaise. Angel 350179.

▲THESE French players are superb musicians who make any program that they perform a real delight to admirers of wind instruments. The Hindemith is of greater consequence in its harmonic innovation and contrapuntal writing, but the French pieces are quite irresistible when performed as they are here. Wonderfully realistic reproduction. —P.H.R.

MOZART: Sonatas for Violin & Piano—K. 454, K. 481; Joseph Szigeti & George Szell. Columbia ML-5005.

▲THERE is a musical quality in Szigeti's playing that no other violinist of the day can quite equal. Since he and George Szell are old friends as well as compatriots, we should have expected this disc to be an outstanding contribution to the burgeoning Mozart bi-centennial. And it is at least that. First class sound. —J.L.

MUSIC OF INDIA—Morning and Evening Ragas; Khan (sardar), Lal (tabla), Gor (tamboura), Yebudi Menuhin (narrator). Angel 35283.

▲THE contents of this disc are improvisations on a number of ragas—a raga being in effect a theme, of which there are several hundred in common use throughout India. These improvisations, with their quarter- and half-tone effects, are ever fascinating and, like the finest American jazz that they rather resemble, frequently hypnotic. Crystal clear sound. Discreet remarks by Menuhin. —J.L.

NIELSEN: String Quartet No. 4, Op. 44; **HOLMBOE:** String Quartet No. 3, Op. 48; Koppel Quartet. London LL-1119.

▲EMOTIONALLY, Nielson's last quartet covers a wide range. The work is one that will repay repeated playings. Vagn Holmboe's quartet is more modern and intensely serious, exceptionally well written for the four instruments. His style seems to be derived from both Bartok and Nielsen, two composers who have inspired his imagination. The performances are praiseworthy. The recording is excellent. —P.H.R.

PROKOFIEV: Sonata for Flute and Piano, Op. 94; **ROUSSEL:** Trio for Flute, Viola & Cello, Op. 40; Doriot Anthony Dwyer (flute), J. M. Sanroma (piano), J. de Pasquale (viola); S. Mayes (cello). Boston B-208.

▲THE Prokofiev, best known as a violin sonata, was originally conceived for flute and piano. Dwyer is one of the finest flutists in the world. Her sympathies for the modern esthetic being strong, these performances may be considered definitive. All the artists are associated with the Boston Sym. Orch. It goes without saying that their collaboration in the Roussel masterpiece is a sheer delight. (The Roussel will be found elsewhere coupled with a Debussy sonata. Choice in performances will be governed by disc mates, since both performances are above reproach.) —J.N.

PROKOFIEV: Sonata in D, Op. 94; **HANDEL:** Sonata No. 4; **VITALI:** Chaconne; Milstein & Balsam. Capitol P. 8315.

▲IF I were asked to choose the outstanding violin disc in circulation, it would be this. The Prokofiev is a masterpiece (either in its original version for flute and piano or in this alternate setting) and not merely a showcase for tone and technique. The now dated performance of this sonata by Szigeti is challenged by this one, which is superbly recorded. The Handel is handsomely presented, perhaps too too much so. The Vitali is beloved of violinists and if more of them played it as Milstein does it might be beloved of the commonality as well. —J.L.

SCHUBERT: Octet, Op. 166; Vienna Octet. London LL-1049.

▲THIS is as fine a performance of this lengthy work as there is on records to date, and its rich sounding reproduction is rewarding to the ear. —R.R.

SCHUMANN: Quartet, Op. 41, No. 2; Quartet, Op. 41, No. 3; New Music Quartet. Columbia ML-4962.

▲THIS ensemble is among the most gifted of the new quartets. Their performance of Op. 41, No. 2 is stronger and more impassioned than a competitive issue. Op. 41, No. 3 is also better played than its competitive version. Beautiful and romantic music, it is Schumann's finest quartet. Exceptionally fine recording. —P.H.R.

VIVALDI: Various Chamber works for Small Instrumental Groups; Rampal (flute), Pierlot (oboe), Gendre (violin), Honge (Bassoon), Veyron-Lacroix (harpichord). Haydn Society 116.

▲THIS is one of the most delightful Vivaldi programs extant. The works, written for small ensembles, are each in their own way gems, and the performances by the five excellent French musicians are exceptional in every way for their stylistic polish, verve and poise. Excellent recording. —P.H.R.

WALTON: *Piano Quartet*; Robert Masters Piano-forte Quartet; *Violin Sonata*; Rostal and Horsley. Westminster WN-18024.

▲EVEN after three decades (it was written in 1918), the Walton *Piano Quartet* commands attention. The *Violin Sonata* (written in the late 40s) finds his style became more philosophical with the gentle, chiding smile replacing the once mocking sneer. The performances are exquisite; the sound likewise. —J.L.

WOLPE: *Sonata for Violin & Piano*; *Passacaglia for Piano*; *Quartet for trumpet, tenor saxophone, piano and percussion*; Magnes (violin). Tudor (piano), and Instrumental Ensemble. Esoteric ES-530.

▲WOLPE, a Berliner who went to Israel and thence to New York, is a composer of considerable power who pursues the esthetic of atonalism. His *Passacaglia* is a concentrated intense work written in the '30s. The impressive but hardly felicitous *Sonata*, and the bittersweet *Quartet*, with its satiric overtones of popular style, are more recent products. A superb recording. —J.L.

KEYBOARD

ART OF THE ORGAN: *Selections by Purcell, Sweelinck, Pachelbel, Buxtehude, Bach*; E. Power Biggs. Columbia set SL-219.

▲DURING his 1954 summer tour through Europe, Biggs was accompanied by a Columbia engineer to preserve for posterity his performances on some of the noblest musical instruments our world has to offer. This superbly recorded set—a bargain by any standards—is unquestionably one of the outstanding issues of the year. —C.J.L.

BACH: *Alla breve in D; Toccata & Fugue in D mi.; Preludes & Fugues in D, E, & A mi.*; Anton Heiller (organ). Epic LC-3132.

▲THIS disc is clearly one of the best organ programs of the year, containing as it does an unusual abundance of Bach's finest work, performed by the gifted Austrian organist with scholarship, culture, and high technical attainment. Good sound. —C.J.L.

BACKHAUS IN RECITAL: *Works by Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Schubert-Liszt, Brahms*; Wilhelm Backhaus (piano). London set LL-1108/09.

▲THIS is a recording of the taxing program that Backhaus, septagenarian *extraordinaire*, gave in Carnegie Hall on March 30, 1954, his first appearance in New York in 28 years. There are three absolutely unassailable performances on these records: those of the ever-so-delicate Beethoven Sonatas—Op. 79, Op. 111, and that old fashioned charmer, the Schubert-Liszt *Soiree de Vienne*. The rest of the performances are praiseworthy except for the final Brahms' *Intermezzo* in which the pianist was obviously tired. The recording of his upper and middle range tones is more lifelike than when he made earlier studio recordings, but the bass needs a strong boost. —C.J.L.

COUPERIN: *Harpichord Works*; Ruggero Gerlin, London L'Oiseau-Lyre sets 50052/53.

▲GERLIN has undertaken to perform the complete keyboard works of Couperin, which comprise 27 suites with 449 pieces in all. The magnitude of such an undertaking imposes a formidable artistic responsibility on a player which, it must be said, Gerlin has valiantly met. Gerlin achieves variety of color and registration without overuse of the eight and sixteen foot tone. There is rhythmic fluency and clarity in his performances. Some of his tempi may be debatable, being on the slow and fast sides on occasion. Recommended for those who find the unrelieved harpsichord tone in long periods does not sustain full interest are the disc containing the *Eighth Suite* with the great *Passacaglia* and the disc containing the *26th Suite*—regarded by some as one of the best. Excellent recording. —P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: *Preludes—Book II*. Angel 35249. *Etudes; D'un cahier d'esquisses*. Angel 35250. Walter Gieseking (piano).

▲GIESEKING remains the unexcelled interpreter of Debussy. His performance of the *Preludes* in 1939 was inimitable, and his performance now is inimitable. (H.C.S.) In the case of neglected Debussy *Etudes*, Gieseking has truly rehabilitated them. He has discovered tiny nuances and subtle balances that will force many to change their opinions of these works. (C.J.L.) Fine recording on both discs.

GRIEG: *Ballade in G mi.; Cradle Song, Spring Dance, etc.*; Rubinstein (piano). Victor LM-1872.

▲THE coloration and richness of sound that Rubinstein attains in the sonata as well as in the lyric pieces gives the music a glowing life that serves the composer to advantage. Realistic piano tone. —P.H.R.

A MEMENTO OF JOSEF HOFMANN: *Selections from Chopin, Rachmaninov, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Moszkowski*; Josef Hofmann (piano).

▲THIS presentation presents a goodly portion of Hofmann's Golden Jubilee Concert given at the Metropolitan Opera House on November 28, 1937. Rescued from acetates which were probably in poor condition, the sound is not too good, especially in forte passages. Still the disc provides LP era buyers with perhaps their only opportunity to hear one of the greatest pianists of our century. Hofmann's Chopin is filled with many fascinating ideas, and the playing of the remaining pieces is for the most part superb and worthy of close study. —C.J.L.

MOZART: *Complete Piano Works*; Walter Gieseking. Angel De-Luxe Limited Edition. (11 discs). Also now being issued individually.

▲GIESEKING does not seem the ideal performer for all of Mozart's piano music. While his tone here is always ingratiating, he conveys little feeling for the music in the present projection. His pedalling seems far too spare for true dynamic distinction. He is more successful in the lighter works. In the larger ones, he does not fully rise to the occasion. There is no longer the force and confidence he brought to his earlier recordings of Mozart. The pianist seems to have continued his delicate style of Debussy playing—unexcelled in its own genre but less persuasive in Mozart. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Sonatas, K. 283, K. 331, K. 545, Rondo K. 511*; Guiomar Novaes (piano). Vox PL-9080.

▲THE stylistic individuality of the pianist's interpretations of three of Mozart's most popular sonatas and the deeply felt *Rondo* are so charmingly realized that criticism is forestalled. She is splendidly served by the realistic recording. —R.R.

WORKS FOR ORGAN BY PACHELBEL AND WALTHER: Luther Noss. Overtone 8.

▲THE two composers are more or less contemporaries of Bach, and especially their chorale preludes make an interesting study in connection with Bach's compositions on these same tunes. Noss plays with lively rhythmic sense and nicely varied registrations. This is one of the best organ recordings I have heard. —C.J.L.

SATIE: *Piano Works*; William Masselos. MGM E3154.

▲IF, as your reviewer, you agree with Cocteau that "there are certain works of art whose importance lies in their depth; the size of the office is of small account," then you may be enchanted with this new compendium of Satie's piano music. Masselos plays all the pieces cleanly, clearly, coolly, like an angel, and surely MGM has given us no better piano sound than this. —C.J.L.

SCARLATTI: *12 Sonatas for Harpsichord, Vol. VI*. Westminster WL-5325. *12 Sonatas, Vol. VII*. Westminster WL-5359. *12 Sonatas, Vol. VIII*. Westminster WN-18009. *12 Sonatas, Vol. IX*. Westminster WN-18029. *12 Sonatas, Vol. X*. Westminster WN-18068. Fernando Valenti.

▲MR. VALENTI has, with the help of Westminster's splendid recording, reawakened interest in Scarlatti's fabulous keyboard works in which one discovers an increasingly amazing revelation in the great variety that the composer achieved in the binary-form sonata. The great composer's art seems richer and richer the more one knows it. Valenti is in the process of recording all 550 of the Scarlatti sonatas. To date, he has performed 120 of them. Valenti is at his best in the more dramatic sonatas or in those that make demands on his really imposing technique, and he manages the more poetic ones well enough. More than anyone else he has identified himself with the composer in a memorable manner.

SCARLATTI: *60 Sonatas*; Ralph Kirkpatrick. Columbia set SL-221.

▲KIRKPATRICK, who has renumbered Scarlatti's 550 sonatas in chronological order to restore the original arrangement of many of the sonatas in pairs, plays the 60 sonatas he likes best in their order. His playing throughout the set is uneven to say the least. He seems unequal technically to the demands of some of the works. Roughly half of the sonatas, however, are performed lovingly. For the rest, one will find better playing on the several discs by Valenti. Fine recording. —C.J.L.

MASTERS OF THE HARPSICHORD: *Toccata No. 7 (A. Scarlatti), Spanish & Portuguese Masters of the 17th & 18th century*. Ruggero Gerlin. Oiseau-Lyre OL-50032. **MASTERS OF THE HARPSICHORD: Italian & German**. Ruggero Gerlin. Oiseau-Lyre OL-50043.

▲THESE two recorded programs are played on a Pleyel instrument in stunning fashion by Gerlin. The lengthy Alessandro Scarlatti *Toccata* is a grand work. One is constantly reminded of Domenico Scarlatti listening to the Spanish and Portuguese music. These short pieces abound with life and color. The other disc contains an equally delightful collection of harpsichord music by early Italian and German composers. It is highlighted for the magnificent set of variations by Frosberger. The recording is well balanced with plenty of room resonance. —R.R.

ORGAN MUSIC FROM SWEELINCK TO HINDEMITH: Fritz Heitmann. Telefunken set LGX-66037.

▲THIS set seems a well chosen recital rather than a survey. The great Fritz Heitmann is in top form throughout the recital and the recording is very clean and apparently accomplished in intimate surroundings. The organ is of the Baroque type found in Northern Germany and very satisfying. —C.J.L.

NOVELTIES

FLAMENCO ANTHOLOGY: Westminster WL-5303/05.

▲THE aim of these releases, the production of which was entrusted to the Spanish authority Tomas Andrade de Silva, was "the ambitious task of assembling a clear and authoritative anthology of Flamenco songs, quite unprecedented both in selectivity and comprehensiveness." Mr. de Silva has assuredly succeeded in his endeavor, and his notebook is the most valuable contribution of its kind devised for American listeners of Flamenco recordings, which not only gives us an insight into the history of the different styles but also provides valued translations of the songs. —P.H.R.

JOSE GRECO BALLETS: Decca DL-9757. *Danzas Flamencas*. Decca DL-9758.

▲NO one who has seen Jose Greco dance will want to miss these records, in which his magical foot work is recalled to mind in many of the selections. Well recorded. —P.H.R.

VOICE

BACH: *Cantata No. 170; Cantata No. 54; Mass in B minor—Agnus Dei*; Alfred Deller (counter-

tenor), Guild B. ▲TO hear...
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tenor), Leonardt Baroque Ensemble. Bach Guild BG-550.

▲TO hear this music in Deller's voice is an experience in itself. He gives us vocalism as neat as a pin, singing marked by high musicianship and an always evident understanding of the words. The recording benefits by the use of the 1642 organ in Vienna's Franziskanerkirche, and from a fortunate balance between voice and instruments. —P.L.M.

BACH: *Magnificat in D*; Soloists, Chorus of Radio Stuttgart, Pro Musica Orch., Reinhardt (cond.). Vox PL-8890.

▲THIS is easily the best of the three *Magnificats* now listed. A standard of clarity is maintained throughout the choral sections of the work, the soloists are a capable lot, and for the most part sing cleanly. The reproduction is quite brilliant. —P.L.M.

BETHOVEN: *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op. 98; **SCHUBERT:** *Schwanengesang*, Nos. 8-13 (Heine Songs); Fischer-Dieskau & Moore. HMV ALP 1066.

▲VICTOR's LHMV 1046 duplicates this program with added songs, but the quality of sound is better on this imported disc. Our English friends, always more interested in quality than in quantity, do not believe in crowding a record side. Fischer-Dieskau and Moore are artists of such distinction that many may wish to acquire this particular disc. —P.L.M.

BELLINI: *Four Songs*; **GOUNOD:** *Three Songs*; Danco (soprano) & Agosti (piano). London 10" LD-9144.

▲THE Bellini are miniatures worked in the same melodic gold we know so well in his arias. For their realization they want just the kind of limpid and tonally lovely singing that Danco gives them. The Gounod program is hardly less attractive. Fine recording. —P.L.M.

BRUCKNER: *Te Deum*; Soloists, Westminster Choir, Phil.-Sym. Orch., Bruno Walter (cond.). **MAHLER:** *Kindertotenlieder*; Ferrier, Vienna Phil. Orch., Walter (cond.). Columbia ML-4980.

▲WALTER is at his best and most affectionate in the *Te Deum*, which is superior in every way to other versions. The Mahler is an old friend, formerly issued by London on a 10" disc; it is much more convenient in its new shape. —P.L.M.

MARIA CALLAS SINGS: *Arias from Tristan and Isolde, I Puritani, La Traviata and La Gioconda*. Cetra 50175.

▲THIS disc is recommended for Callas' singing of the *Liebestod*, which lends itself to the Italian language though it alters the character of some of the phrasing. This recording and those from *I Puritani* are taken from earlier 78-rpm discs made by the soprano which offer some interesting comparisons with her later recordings. Varying sound but satisfactory. —J.N.

CLAUDEL-MILHAUD: *Christophe Colomb* (Complete); Renaud-Barrault Company with unidentified orchestra. London Int. TW-91085.

▲THIS is not Milhaud's opera of the same name, but the play with incidental music, most of which represents Milhaud at his best. As to the drama, the composer found it worthy of his having "devoted my attention with all my heart." Taken together, the effect is stunning. —J.L.

COUPERIN: *Three Services for Holy Week and Two Motets*; Saterueau (soprano), Collard (contralto), Pierront (organ, 2 violins and viola da gamba). Haydn Soc. 105. *Three Services*; Cuenod & Sinimberghi (tenors), Holetschek (harpichord & organ), Harrard (cello). Westminster WL-5387.

▲THESE works rank among their composer's greatest and attain expressive and dramatic heights of religious fervor. Since Couperin indicated the use of a counter-tenor, it is probable that professional singers were employed, though the nuns—for whom the works were written—undoubtedly presented these services with all women's voices.

Cuenod has long been associated with these *Services* and probably stands alone among present-day singers in his ability to cope with the music. Preference between these performances will be governed by personal taste; both are worth hearing and both are well recorded. No listener should deprive himself of hearing these inspired compositions. —P.H.R.

CRITIC'S CHOICE: *Vocal Selections by McCormack, Perras, Schumann-Heink, Schumann, Barber, Kipnis, Frijish, Bernac, Garden, Raisa, Dal Monte, Chaliapin*. Victor LCT-1158.

▲PAUL HUME (the Washington critic) has left the beaten path in making up his program, and has made available again a number of gems that a new collector might otherwise miss. —P.L.M. (The selections are chosen from both acoustic and electric recordings of Victor's recordings of famous singers of the past.)

DEBUSSY: *Le Martyre de Saint Sebastian*; Danco, Waugh, Gontmollin, Choras, Ansermet & Swiss Romande Orch. London LL-1061.

▲THE music is mature (it was written in 1911) and characteristic of its composer, full to the brim with harmonic and coloristic subtleties. This new set supersedes an older one. Ansermet is noted for his understanding of such music as this, and he has excellent forces with which to work. Danco does especially distinguished singing, and the choral singing is admirable. Excellent recording. —P.L.M.

FIFTY YEARS OF GREAT OPERATIC SINGING: Victor Limited Edition LCT 6701.

▲IRVING KOLODIN has chosen 68 operatic recordings of famous artists of past and present which, for one reason or another, can be qualified as great. For the admirer of great operatic singing, this set is a must. The engineering in the acoustical recordings is quite remarkable in many cases, and few of the 78 electrical recordings seem to have lost anything from their transfer to LP. —P.H.R.

FOLK SONGS: Peter Pears (tenor) & Benjamin Britten (piano). London 10" LD-9136.

▲BRITTEN'S arrangements of these traditional songs of the British Isles are delightfully conceived. The recital seems all too short, for the singer and his knowing accompanist provide one of the most pleasurable programs of its kind on LP. The boldly dramatic Scottish *The bonny Earl o' Moray* and the tender Welsh *Ash Grove* will not be soon forgotten. —P.H.R.

FRENCH SONGS by Debussy, Bachelet, Faure, Duparc, Bizet: Nan Merriman & Gerald Moore. Angel 35217.

▲THIS is the finest singing I have heard from Miss Merriman. Her approach to the Debussy songs is quiet and reserved; there is evidence of serious thought in every one of them. All in all this is an effective program, performed in a musicianly and intelligent manner. —P.L.M.

GLUCK: *Orfeo ed Euridice—Act II*; Merriman, Gibson, Shaw Chorale, Toscanini & NBC Sym. Orch. Victor LM-1850.

▲THE recording derives from a broadcast of Nov. 1952. It is a fine achievement in recorded sound by Victor's knowing engineers. Gluck's music evokes dramatic powers that stir the imagination of a musician like Toscanini. Merriman's fine musicianship and absorption with the text are artistic achievements that command respect. For its emotional powers, this remains one of the Maestro's persuasive performances in modern times. —P.H.R.

HINDEMITH: *Geistliche Motetten*; **MOZART:** *Overture and aria from Il Re Pastore; Non temer, amato bene* (Concert Aria); Irmgard Seefried with piano and orch. Decca DL-9768.

▲MISS SEEFRIED has made something of a specialty of the Hindemith motets. This is not easy music to sing, but the artist is mistress of the situation; one feels that it is vocally effective as well as expressive of the mysteries described in the

texts. The Mozart arias are no less admirable. —P.L.M.

ITALIAN AIRS by Vivaldi, Caldara, Pergolesi, Martini, Scarlatti, Gasparini, Sarri, Bononcini, Carissimi, Durante: Magda Laszlo & Frank Holetschek. Westminster WL-5375.

▲MISS LASZLO is in particularly good voice in this fine program; she and Mr. Holetschek are recorded in admirable balance. The recital is nicely varied with some of the best known Italian classics and others little sung in our time. Of especial interest are three arrangements of old *Laudi*, here attributed to Pergolesi. —P.L.M.

IVES: *23 Songs*; Helen Boatwright (soprano) & John Kirkpatrick (piano). Overtone 7.

▲I do not hesitate to hail this as the finest contribution to the literature of recorded American song any artist has made to date. —P.L.M.

JANACEK: *Tagebuch eines Verschollenen*; Haefliger (tenor), Meyer (mezzo-soprano), Nobel (piano), three members of the Netherlands Chamber Choir. Epic LC-3121.

▲THIS curious song cycle tells the story of a young man who disappears from his town under the spell of a gypsy. The work has been admired for its assertive and almost brutal truth of expression. Haefliger does the most impressive singing, but Miss Meyer is excellent for what she has to do. Well recorded. —P.L.M.

LANDE: *De Profundis*; Soloists, Chorus of Radio Stuttgart, Pro Musica Orch., Couraud (cond.). Vox PL-9040.

▲LANDE was superintendent of the King's music under Louis XIV and the leading French composer of sacred music in his time. It is said that Handel was deeply impressed with Lalande's vocal music, and that it influenced his development in this field. This record is a worthwhile addition to any record library, particularly important to those who collect notable vocal works, for this score must rank high on any thinking person's list, both from a historical and emotional point of view. The performance is solid and rewarding for its grave simplicity and sustained power of communication. —A.W.P.

MADRIGALS of Weelkes and Bateson: The Randolph Singers. Westminster WL 5361.

▲THIS is a program containing some of the finest works of two of the greatest Elizabethan madrigal composers. The performance has been carefully prepared and the singers have a real understanding of the magnificent music they are bringing to us. —P.L.M.

MAHLER: *Kindertotenlieder; Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*; Norman Foster, Horenstein and Orch. Vox PL-9100.

▲WITH this recording Norman Foster, a Boston-born baritone, comes into his own as a gifted and sensitive artist. In *Kindertotenlieder*, he sings with a fervor and absorption that recall the famous Rehkemper performance. The *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* are hardly less admirable. Good recording. —P.L.M.

MONTEVERDI: *Il Combattimento di Tancredi e Clorinda; Ballo; Madrigal*; Tegani (soprano), Garbi (Mezzo-soprano), Nobile (tenor), Madrigalisti Milanesi, Orch., Fait (cond.). Vox PL-8560.

▲THIS is the best version of Monteverdi's dramatic cantata which, I have found, proves more and more fascinating in subsequent hearings. Tegani and Nobile are vocally better endowed than previous singers, and Garbi's beauty of voice is in her favor. The splendid recording here gives this disc precedence over other issues. —P.L.M.

MOZART: *Masonic Music*; Soloists, Vienna Sym. Orch., Vienna Cham. Choir, Paumgartner (cond.). Epic LC-3062.

▲MOZART wrote some of his most beautiful music under the spell of Masonic comradeship. These are all lovely, affecting works in their several ways,

and the performances are uniformly fine. Big, resonant sound. —J.L.

PURCELL: *Come, Ye Sons of Art (Birthday Ode)*; Ritchie (soprano), Deller & Whitworth (countertenors), Boyce (baritone), St. Anthony Singers, Orch., Lewis (cond.). L'Oiseau-Lyre 10" 53004.

▲THIS work, written for Queen Mary, wife of William III (1694), is most effective. Purcell obviously enjoyed writing it. Male altos (or counter-tenors) were common in Purcell's time, so he wrote a good deal of music for them. One of his most famous pieces, *Sound the Trumpet*, was originally written for two altos. How fortunate we are to have it sung as brilliantly as in this performance by Deller and Whitworth. The long florid passages are tossed off like child's play. The other soloists are first-rate and the recorded sound is excellent. —R.R.

RAVEL: *Sheherazade; Two Hebrew Melodies; Three Poems by Mallarmé*; Suzanne Danco, Ansermet, Swiss Romande Orch. London LL-1196.

▲DANCO has lost nothing of the vocal purity or the dreamy delivery of her earlier 78-rpm version. Ansermet brings out the wonderful atmospheric detail in the orchestration. Only the balance leaves something to be desired, being too much in favor of the orchestra. —P.L.M.

SCHOENBERG: *Pierrot Lunaire*; Alice Howland, Instrumentalists; Arthur Winograd (cond.). MGM E3202.

▲HERE is a work one can hardly make money performing; yet that fact has not deterred Windograd's altruistic crew from taking the trouble to prepare a rendition that is unsurpassed in my memory. I suspect that it may win a few new friends for *Pierrot*. —C.J.L.

SOPHOCLES: *Oedipus* (abbreviated version with music by Harry Partch); Allan Louw, Sue Bell Starck and others. Gate 5 Ensemble (2 disc set) Box 387, Marin City, Calif.

▲TO those who have followed the Mr. Partch's career with their ears open (he is a composer whose works are scored for instruments of his own devising, based on the 43-tone scale), he seems with every new work to deserve a greater place among contemporary artists. He is a born musical dramatist and in all his productions one hears the unmistakable note of power. I shall not describe *Oedipus* beyond saying that it is a compact version of the play, admirably spoken and chanted and sung, to accompaniments which defy description in the usual critical jargon. Yet, it takes no special study of or accustoming to the scale in order to be deeply moved. —Jacques Barzun

VERDI: *Requiem Mass*; Soloists, Choir, RIAS Sym. Orch. & Chorus, Fricsay (cond.). Decca set DX-118.

▲THERE will be many who will share the gratitude that this reporter feels toward Fricsay for remembering the devotional aspects of the *Requiem Mass* and for retrieving it from the shadow of the opera house. A fine performance and a fine recording. —P.H.R.

WARLOCK: *The Curlew* (for Tenor Voice, flute, English Horn and string quartet); 12 Songs; Alexander Young (tenor) and Instrumentalists, Gordon Watson (piano, in the songs). Westminster WN-18022.

▲THE CURLEW has been called one of the greatest works of our generation. Its text is drawn from four poems of Yeats. It is an intensely melancholic and haunting opus with its curlew calls on the English horn and the feeling often of utter desolation in the setting of the words. Some of the songs are among the finest written in the English language. Mr. Young is a sensitive singer who summons the mood of the music, not alone in *The Curlew*, but in the songs. The recording is excellent. —P.H.R.

OPERA

BARTOK: *Bluebeard's Castle*; Lorsy, Koreh, Hellwig, New Sym. Orch. of London, Susskind (cond.). Bartok set 310/311.

▲THIS opera is a moving and strangely haunting score with harmonic richness and no offending dissonance for all its dramatic impacts. In this work we encounter the rhapsodic and improvisatory Bartok, whose imagination is quickened and whose emotions are aroused by a fantastic tale. The production is a superbly realistic fulfillment of modern engineering methods. —P.H.R.

BORODIN: *Prince Igor*; Artists, Chorus and Orch. of the Belgrade National Opera, Oscar Danon. London set XLLA 30.

▲AS an experience in Russian national opera this set, with its fine reproduction and its completeness, serves the issue better than a previous one. The singers are talented vocal actors and the conductor provides a vital and sensitive unfoldment of the orchestral part. —P.H.R.

CHABRIER: *Un Education manquee*; Castelli, Collart, Depraz, Orch. Sym. de Paris, Bruck (cond.). Vanguard 640.

▲THE music is the work of a genius who could handle the slightest subject with elegance, charm and subtle humor. And what a subject! Two young people, just married, find themselves in need of advice. A goodly part of this opera is spoken dialogue but a libretto is on hand. The singers are excellent artists. The recording is first-rate. —P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: *Pelleas et Melisande*; Micheau, Maurane, Roux, Depraz, Gorr, etc., Orch. Concerts Lamoureux, Chorus, Fournet (cond.). Epic set SC-6003.

▲IF you like your *Pelleas* dreamy and other-worldish, maybe the Victor set under Desormiere should be your choice. If you insist on the latest recording techniques, you will give your attention to either the London or the Epic. Ansermet and his orchestra are a serious consideration in favor of the former, but the present version has a good orchestra, a knowledgeable conductor, and some admirably selected singers. —P.L.M.

GLANVILLE-HICKS: *The Transposed Heads*; Soloists, Chorus and Louisville Sym. Orch., Moritz Bombard (cond.). 2 discs (3 sides) issued by Louisville Orch., 830 So. 4th St., Louisville 3, Ky.

▲MISS GLANVILLE-HICKS has composed an entirely stageworthy work of compelling and sustained loveliness. All three of the leading roles, and the two lesser ones as well, are handled with aplomb by the young singers. Mr. Bombard deserves special commendation for contriving so effective a performance. Fine recording. —J.L.

LEONCAVALLO: *Pagliacci*; Callas, di Stefano, Gobbi, Monte, Panerai, Orch. & Chorus of La Scala, Serafin (cond.). Angel set 3527.

▲WHAT a scene between Nedda and Tonio in the first act! There's none like it on records. Callas and Gobbi steal the show, and di Stefano sings with assurance. The orchestral direction of Serafin is dramatic and even melodramatic. Excellent recording quality. —P.H.R.

MUSSORGSKY: *Khovanschina*; Soloists, Chorus & Orch. of the Belgrade National Opera, Baranovich (cond.). London set XLLA-29.

▲THIS is a work of great austere beauty, too seldom heard in the opera house. The genius of Mussorgsky is ever present in the music. As singing actors, this Belgrade cast are in the know and they acquire themselves satisfactorily. The choral singing is superb, the conducting imaginative and vital. The recording is most realistic. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Così fan tutte*; Schwarzkopf, Merriman, Simoneau, Panerai, Otto, Bruscantini, Philharmonia Orch. & Chorus, Karajan (cond.). Angel set 3522.

▲THIS is the kind of performance that, one can

believe, Mozart intended—intimate, subtle and elegant. The interpretation rates with the old Glyndebourne set. Karajan's absorption with the score is as much a labor of love as Busch's. He is to be commended for following Mozart's dynamics closely, especially the piano passages. All the singers are praiseworthy. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Don Giovanni*; Danco, della Casa, Guedin, Dermota, Siepi, Corena, etc., Chorus, Vienna Phil. Orch., Krips (cond.). London set XLLA-34.

▲THOUGH the London set takes one extra disc than a competitive version, it is nevertheless the one to buy. Spreading the opera on 4 discs has allowed for virtually unsullied sound even in the loudest passages. Moreover, it is a superb musical performance which often achieves dramatic power and is so marvelously detailed that the score accompanying the set is almost necessary. Mozart seems to bring out the best from these singers and from the conductor. The recent Epic set, though well recorded, is something of a disappointment; it does not seem as carefully prepared. Of the two Dons, Siepi gives the better performance. Wonderful recording. —C.J.L.

PUCCHINI: *Madama Butterfly*; Petrella, Tagliavini, Taddei, etc., Sym. Orch. of Radio-televisione Italiana, Questa (cond.). Cetra set C-1248.

▲VOCALLY, Tebaldi is the most impressive Butterfly on records, but Clara Petrella acts with her voice in the more telling manner. Tagliavini gives one of his best performances on records, and Taddei is the best Sharpless to date. Questa is a knowing conductor, animated and shipshape. The recording is excellent, though favoring the singers. —P.H.R.

PUCCHINI: *Manon Lescaut*; Albanese, Bjoerling, Merrill, etc., Orch. & Chorus of Rome Opera House, Perlea (cond.). Victor set LM-6116.

▲EASILY the best of the *Manon Lescaut* with Bjoerling at his finest, and Albanese contriving a sweet-voiced and sympathetic Manon. Merrill is a rich voiced Lescaut. Recording is well balanced and realistic. —P.H.R.

SMETANA: *Dalibor*; Soloists, Chorus & Orch. of the Prague National Theatre, Krombholc (cond.). Supraphone discs SLPLV-98/99/100. Colosseum set 181/2/3.

▲SMETANA'S *Dalibor* has been called "a great tragic opera, a Czech *Fidelio*." The set to obtain is the Supraphon one; the Colosseum is a dubbing, inferior in sound. The singers bring fervor and passion to their portrayals. The men are excellent, the women convincing but sometimes tonally unsteady. The chorus, orchestra and conductor acquit themselves as true compatriots. —P.H.R.

STRAUSS: *Ariadne auf Naxos*; Schwarzkopf, Seefried, Streich, Doench, Schock, Unger, etc., Philharmonia Orch., Karajan (cond.). Angel set 3532.

▲HERE for the epicures is *Ariadne*, and one of those carefully picked casts we have come to expect from Angel operatic records. The performance in this immaculate recording has many virtues. Schwarzkopf sings with exquisite tonal beauty. Streich is admirably musical. Seefried could hardly be better. The opera contains some of Strauss' loveliest music. —P.L.M.

STRAUSS: *Arabella—The Great Scenes*; Schwarzkopf, Metternich, Gedda, Felbermayer, othen, Philharmonia Orch., Maticic (cond.). Angel 35194.

▲WHILE *Arabella*—laid in Vienna in 1860—has much charm, it is hardly another *Rosenkavalier*, which the composer and his librettist hoped it would be. At seventy, Strauss was still a highly competent technician and these scenes reveal his musical skill. The burden falls on Miss Schwarzkopf, who sings handsomely and, being an admirer of the lady I, for one, would not wish to miss this opportunity to enjoy her *Arabella*. Fine recording. —P.H.R.

Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Cowper

ORCHESTRA

BOCCHERINI: *Symphony in C, Op. 13, No. 3; Sinfonia Funebre in B*; The Vienna Orchestral Society, conducted by F. Charles Adler. Unicorn UNLP-1017, \$3.98.

▲MR. ADLER has a wide appreciation of music. He likes to revive interest in forgotten scores of yesteryear and to stimulate interest in music of our own time. Boccherini was, as we know, a prolific composer. Of the 20 symphonies that he wrote the C major, performed here, seems to be the one that retains its place in concert halls in Europe. There is, as the annotator says, a certain integrity and dignity to Boccherini's music; it is beyond question of a doubt easily assimilable. It has musical charm to a certain degree, melodic grace and some spontaneity, yet in the case of this symphony it fails to live in the mind of the listener. Mr. Adler performs it adroitly, but he cannot make it seem like a masterpiece. The *Sinfonia Funebre* is a classical curio; it almost approaches romanticism. Its four movements depict various reviews of some unknown deceased—the first is marked *In Memoria* and is suitably grave; the second might be "a musical picture of the character and nature of the deceased;" the third is evidently intended as the funeral procession and the finale as a eulogy. Music to Boccherini was something pleasant and, when at his best, he is most diverting. Here, he eschews tragic implications and hardly advances his elegiac feelings in a manner to make us think of a personal grief. Of the two works, this is the more interesting because its composer suggests a philosophy of extended happiness in death rather than one of grief. I would not wish to predict the extent of appeal that this or the other symphony would have for anyone. First-rate recording. —P.H.R.

DVORAK: *Concerto in A minor, Op. 53; MENDELSSOHN: Concerto in E minor, Op. 64*; respectively Thomas Magyar and Arthur Grumiaux (violins) with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Wilhelm Loibner and Rudolf Moralt. Epic LC-3173, \$3.98.

▲THE Oistrakh performance of the Dvorak, on a Vanguard disc, continues to be desirable for all of its low sonic ceiling. Now that he is spending so much time in American recording studios, perhaps he will even give us another version yet. Those to whom sound is the controlling factor decidedly will favor the Epic, and it must be conceded that Magyar plays well enough, if not with quite the ardor (and technique) that this score demands. Grumiaux's Mendelssohn is as satisfactory as almost anybody else's, but surely it was not the happiest coupling for the slightly off-beat Dvorak. Nor is the accompaniment so well matched, for Grumiaux is a vaulting virtuoso and this orchestra is not much for soaring aloft. The sound is resonant, and just a bit bass-heavy. —J.L.

JANACEK: *Concertino*; Rudolf Firkusny (piano) and the Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet and three strings, *Mladi—Youth Suite*; The Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet. Columbia ML-4995, \$4.98.

▲FIRKUSNY has long been associated with the *Concertino*, having recorded it a long time ago for Concert Hall. Next to Janacek's *Sinfonietta*, this is his most striking opus, as imaginatively gripping as anything I can think of at the moment. Both this work and the *Mladi* (previously on an LP, now withdrawn) typify Janacek's feeling for nature. The suite is more atmospheric, however, and delightfully scored for wind instruments. Both works were derived from folk influences, but the *Concertino* is a more intellectual treatment of its source inspiration. Could anything be more clearly implicit in its out-of-door connotations than the third movement with its bird calls? The present performance, by accomplished players of the famed Philadelphia Orchestra, bring this score to life in a wholly delightful manner, which cannot be said of the former release. But the recording has much to do with this. It is an example of Columbia's best, beautifully balanced. The present performance of the *Concertino* takes first place in the sun also, for the playing is more imaginative and compelling. One suspects that Firkusny's sympathetic feeling for the score was imparted to the whole ensemble. —P.H.R.

USANDIZAGA: *Las Golondrinas*; Lorengar, Iriarte, Torres, Munguia, others, Chorus, Grand Sym. Orch., Argenta (cond.). London International TW-91031/2/3.

▲THIS a true Spanish opera. Usandizaga had a gift for melody, drama and the theater. The tale could be called a Spanish *Pagliacci*, for it deals with the loves and jealousies of members of a circus troupe, and it ends tragically. The singers are all fine, especially Lorengar, Iriarte and Torres. Excellent recording. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *Aida*; Milanov, Barbieri, Bjoerling, Warren, Christoff, others, Rome Opera House Chorus and Orch., Perlea (cond.). Victor set LM-6122. **The Same:** Callas, Barbieri, Tucker, Gobbi, others, Orch. & Chorus of La Scala, Serafin (cond.). Angel set 3532.

▲IT will be difficult to choose between these two sets since both have many attributes. From the standpoint of conducting, Perlea steals the honors with the excitement, vitality and fervor he brings to the external excitement of the first two acts, so magnificently recorded by Victor's engineers. But Serafin steals the show with the burning flame of his orchestra in the last two acts. Of the two Aidas, Callas is the best, both vocally and dramatically. She has more flexibility than Milanov, though the latter has some magical moments with her caressing *pianissimo* singing. Bjoerling's voice is magnified by microphoning. He makes a good Rhadames, but Tucker is more exciting and communicates the text better. Warren is best in the second act; Gobbi in the third. Barbieri sings better in the Angel set, and the playing of the La Scala orchestra and the singing of the chorus is more refined than the Rome ensembles. The secondary parts are better sung in the Victor set which boasts a more distinguished Ramfis in Christoff. The brilliance in recording belongs with Victor, but Angel's reproduction is lifelike and more refined in the lyrical passages. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *Il Ballo in Maschera*; Peerce, Merrill, Nelli, Turner, Haskins, others, Shaw Chorale, NBC Sym. Orch., Toscanini (cond.). Victor set LM-6112.

▲THE Toscanini-directed performance of Verdi's *Masked Ball* is among the half-dozen greatest operatic recordings. He proves by the passion and vigor of his unflagging direction that this opera is one of Verdi's greatest. His singers are subservient to his rule, but they acquit themselves commendably and competently. When all things are said and done, one feels that it is the art of Toscanini that makes his singers living characters by the surge and whispered magic of his orchestral direction. Thrilling reproduction. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *La Forza del Destino*; Callas, Tucker, Tagliabue, Nicolai, Rossi-Lemeni, others, Orch. & Chorus of La Scala, Serafin (cond.). Angel set 3531.

▲MARIA CALLAS is the true star of this performance. She proves that she is one of the greatest operatic tragediennes of our time. Tucker is assured and musically efficient as Don Carlo, and Tagliabue sings smoothly if not excitingly. Nicolai makes a fine Preziosilla, and Rossi-Lemeni a smooth voiced Padre Guardiano. Serafin is at his best, and the reproduction is excellent. —P.H.R.

VERDI: *La Traviata*; Tebaldi, Poggi, Protti, others, Chorus & Orch. of Accademia di Sta. Cecilia, Rome, Prandelli (cond.). London set LLA-26.

▲THIS is Tebaldi's show. Though she lacks essential brilliance in the first act, her acting instincts are right. Thereafter, the beauty of her voice is memorable. Despite the handicap of a second-rate Alfredo and a competent, but far from polished Germont, Tebaldi succeeds in making this one of the distinguished operatic offerings of the year. Excellent recording. —P.H.R.

KHACHATURIAN: *Gayne Suite* (Nos. 27, 15, 16, 13, 6, 30, 19, 29 and 35); *Masquerade Suite*; the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Aram Khachaturian. Angel 35277, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲OF all the available versions of *Gayne* excerpts, this latest is far and away the most successful on every count. For those who really care, the Concert Hall Society is about to bring out a nearly complete performance of the ballet score (there are some 35 tableaux in all). Others will be content—nay, delighted—with this sensational presentation of the nine most familiar sections. The Philharmonia is a great orchestra, and Khachaturian apparently knew how to get everything he wanted because the playing is incredibly virtuosic. The sound, too, is wonderful. So with *Masquerade*, although we had an economy-priced run-through of it recently from Columbia that will pose a problem for the coupling-conscious. —J.L.

MENDELSSOHN: *Concerto No. 1 in G minor, Op. 25; BEETHOVEN: Sonata No. 3 in C, Op. 2, No. 3*; Emil Gilels (piano) with (in the former) the U.S.S.R. State Orchestra conducted by Kyril Kondrashin. Concert Hall Society CHS-1312, \$4.98.

▲THE coupling is unusual, but earlier versions of this concerto have had some even less compatible discmates. Gilels plays magnificently, if not in accordance with the Mendelssohnian concept of propriety. His solo offering is even more impressive music-making, although there are those who insist on less power of utterance in early Beethoven. The orchestra suffices unto a background for pianism that detracts, anyway, from all around it. A worthwhile novelty, but withal this recording is not to be regarded as competitive, on sonic grounds, in either work. —J.L.

MOZART: *Symphony No. 25 in G minor, K. 183; Symphony No. 33 in B flat, K. 319*; Bernhard Paumgartner conducting the *Cameralata Academica des Salzburger Mozarteums*. Epic LC-3172, \$5.95.

▲PAUMGARTNER is in the process of recording or supervising the recording of Mozart works for Epic's commemoration of the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth, which takes place on January 27, 1956. One of the foremost living authoritative Mozart scholars, Paumgartner gives us expressive performances of these symphonies. His love for Mozart is manifest in both works, but at the expense of almost overmeticulous detailing. This is felt in the opening and closing movements of the early *G minor*, which do not move forward with the urgency the music suggests. I am afraid I have been spoiled by Toscanini's more forthright and deftly controlled treatment of these movements.

I have always rued that he did not see fit to record this work. However such affectionate care and preparation, the orchestra plays with a unanimity and smoothness which is not as impressively achieved elsewhere. I prefer Paumgartner's *G minor* to Walter's and, for that matter, to the others. It has an elusive something which is not its source of origin that pleases me. As for the gracious *B flat Symphony*, Paumgartner substantiates what Saint-Foix has said about this work—that it "draws for us a delightful picture of a beautiful summer's day; we could almost describe it as his (Mozart's) 'pastoral' symphony!" The recording is more in keeping with the right sound for Mozart's music than the recent Walter discs were, with just the right amount of reverberation not to obscure the inner and lower voices. —P.H.R.

PROKOFIEV: *The Prodigal Son*; New York City Ballet Orchestra conducted by Leon Barzin. Vox PL-9310, \$4.98.

▲ONE of the outstanding releases of this season is Vox's issue of the first complete recording of Prokofiev's masterwork for the dance theatre, *The Prodigal Son*. Some time ago we had a Urania LP that presented the suite from this wondrous ballet and Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 4*, which contains much *Prodigal* material. Neither work begins to approach the complete score, and it is only now that the listener can discover that the *Prodigal* is perhaps the last truly seminal work the late modern Russian master produced. In virtually every major Prokofiev score after 1930, one hears a little bit of the *Prodigal*. George Balanchine, who composed the choreography in 1929 for the *Prodigal* (incidentally the last new work produced by Diaghilev) and revived it for the New York City Ballet Company in 1950, has long maintained that the score is the strongest Prokofiev produced. It is difficult to disagree. Leon Barzin, the very capable musical director of the NYC Ballet (without doubt the strongest dance company America has ever produced), conducts the *Prodigal Son* in his usual clear, stylish manner. The orchestra, better than those attached to most dance troupes, is still hardly first class. But good recording (except for a little too much resonance) and able leadership makes Prokofiev's ideas and expression come through; and that is of primary importance. This is not luxurious execution, but it is good enough to serve one of the great and largely neglected scores produced in our century. —C.J.L.

RACHMANINOV: *Concerto No. 3 in D minor, Op. 30*; Emil Gilels (piano) with Paris Conservatoire Orchestra conducted by André Cluytens. Angel 35230, \$4.98 or \$3.48.

▲DURING his recent visit to America, Gilels made a memorable impression on

one listener only in the music of Prokofiev and in the Tchaikovsky *B flat minor Piano Concerto*. What keeps Gilels' musical art from matching his tremendous grasp of the capabilities of his instrument is baffling, but as one critic pointed out there is seldom in Gilels' playing that ideal fusion of head, heart, and body. This recorded performance of Rachmaninov's most nearly perfect piano concerto is a fine one, but one has only to hear the late composer or Vladimir Horowitz's poorly recorded versions to discover the mercurial elements that escape Gilels. The engineering, incidentally, is not quite expert in its balance of piano and orchestra. The piano is much too predominant to approach what one would hear in a concert hall audition. —C.J.L.

SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 6 in D minor, Op. 104; Pélleas and Mélisande Suite, Op. 46*; Anthony Collins conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. London LL-1277, \$3.98.

▲SIBELIUS' *Sixth Symphony* has been called the Cinderella of the seven. I doubt that many know it or truly appreciate its workmanship. Somehow, it seems detached, almost abstract in its intellectuality. Gerald Abraham cites the opening movement as one of the composer's "most highly organized compositions." Cecil Gray speaks of its Palestrina characteristics. The reason, outside of its polyphony, may be the fact that Sibelius writes in the Dorian mode "with strong leanings to C major," as M.M. recently pointed out in *The Gramophone*. The music is austere, cool and detached as Palestrina can be. Of the symphony as a whole, Abraham says, "the themes seem to be thrown up, as it were, out of the complex musical stream, instead of the stream of thought being evolved from the themes." Of the four movements, the first rather haunts one with its striking individuality, while the other three movements do not live up to the intellectual stimulus of the first. The suite which Sibelius wrote for Maeterlinck's play in 1905, of which we have four excerpts on this disc, seems as remote from the Belgian poet's mystical drama as the composer's home from Maeterlinck's. The best of the four pieces is "Mélisande at the Spinning Wheel," quite as effective in its way as Fauré's is. I find this sort of programming after a substantial protein diet, like the symphony, rather a letdown. It isn't even a palatable dessert.

Be that as it may, London has the right idea in mind in not placing the symphony on one record face, inviting pre-echo from countless machines equipped with short tone arms. Anthony Collins completes his Sibelius symphony sojourn with this issue and auspiciously, too, for the only other version by Sixten Ehrling is not as sensitively performed nor as well recorded. Since I value Karajan's performance of

the *Fifth Symphony* above all others, I see no reason to cling to the Ehrling disc, because this fulfills better the reason that I have retained it to date. —P.H.R.

• **SMETANA:** *Die Moldau*; **ENESCO:** *Rumanian Rhapsody No. 1*; **KODALY:** *Dances of Galanta*; **DVORAK:** *Scherzo Capriccioso*; the Bamberg Symphony conducted by Jonel Perlea. Vox PL-9500, \$4.98.

▲THERE are so many current versions of these several pieces that it would be pointless to explore the comparative values involved. Altogether it would be reasonable to say that you will find the several performances to be excellent unless, by chance, you nurture a strong feeling about the Czech style and tradition, which is notably absent from the Smetana and the Enesco. Still, the bargain aspects of this disc are undeniable, especially if the program would not mean any duplications for you. That would be unlikely, these works aggregating some 30 of the most popular LPs available. But you never can tell about these things. In a word, if you want this program, I recommend that you want it before buying. The sound is finely full-bodied. —J.L.

• **TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Concerto No. 1 in B flat minor, Op. 23*; Emil Gilels (piano) with Fritz Reiner conducting the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. RCA Victor LM-1969, \$3.98.

▲RCA VICTOR deserves congratulations for pairing young Gilels and Reiner for a performance of Tchaikovsky's ubiquitous piano concerto, which the pianist performed in New York with marked success. This performance, superbly recorded, finds Gilels in more controlled racing form than he was in the concert hall, in my estimation, but thereby hangs an engineering tale. Seems like they taped three or four performances and Gilels, enlisting Reiner's sagacity, which one feels certain exerted an influence on the pianist's performance, and Reiner picked the sections from each which they liked best. The result is a performance that varies at times both in shading and tension. As a souvenir of this gifted pianist's visit to this country, it is a mixed blessing at best. To my ears, this is a more flashy and externally dramatic performance than my favorite to date—the Solomon-Dobrowen combine. There are quite a few fine performances of this work, each in its own way a somewhat formidable rival to this new one. Rubinstein, Horowitz and Uninsky come to mind. For sound values, however, this new one brightens more keenly the spotlight on reproduction. Gilels is the recipient of an honor that I do not think his own countrymen would confer on the best of our artists. —P.H.R.

• **SIR THOMAS:** *Timoléon, Le Trésor Supposé* and *Le Chasse de Jeune Henri*

Overtures (Méhul), *Air de Ballet* (Grétry), *Overture in D* (Boccherini), *Tragic Overture* (Brahms), and *Coriolan Overture* (Beethoven); the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Columbia ML-5029, \$4.98.

▲NOTHING but a sketch of Sir Thomas adorns the front cover of this album; hence the "hard sell" title. I must say that it would be difficult to choose another that would make sense. The contents are not only miscellaneous but just about as disparate as anyone could have imagined. Those who would be interested in the lesser known works, as I was and as I hope many others will be, are sure to have long since acquired the Brahms and Beethoven standards. The conductor's way with the latter being familiar, we need only say of them that they are not revealed in any new light, albeit admirably. Attention properly focuses on the three overtures by Etienne Nicholas Méhul (1763-1817), whose name is deserving of far more honor than it has been given by conductors excepting present company and, on the evidence of a Urania disc that includes an early Méhul symphony, the enterprising but undistinguished Rolf Kleinert. Beecham's choice of material confirms that the composer could not only be felicitous within strict forms but also could be brilliantly descriptive in his dramatic writing—the overtures herewith being quite successful in their communication of heroic or hilarious sentiments as indicated by the libretti of the various operas. This is delicious music and we are indebted to Sir Thomas for introducing us to it. The snippet by Grétry and the characteristic Boccherini overture (in the *sinfonia* style) are painless in this context, although another Méhul piece would have been more welcome. Fine playing throughout, and rich sound, too. —J.L.

• **VIVALDI:** *The Seasons (I Concerti delle Stagioni, Op. 8)*; Virtuosi di Roma conducted by Renato Fasano. RCA Victor LHMV 26, \$4.98.

▲AT LONG last, we have performances of Vivaldi's program concerti that are stylistically above reproach, and played with warmth, delicate expressivity and welcome buoyancy. No one, familiar with the performances of Vivaldi concerti by this accomplished chamber group, needs to be told that it brings life and sustenance to the music of the Baroque and classical masters. It all adds up to a certain radiation that these inspired musicians, under the knowing direction of their accomplished conductor, Renato Fasano, bring to old music. There is a freshness in their music-making that displaces time and makes the immediacy of the playing seem as much a part of our time as of the past. Only with scores and direct comparisons with other performances of various works can one fully appreciate the extent of this

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ensembles subtleties of rhythm and coloration. As ingenious as Vivaldi's *Seasons* are, they do not rate among his great works, and yet, hearing them played as they are here one can forget the all-too-descriptive program and enjoy the concertos as music *per se*. The recording is simply wonderful, full of light and air and the zest of musical wonder. One is tempted to say that the effect of the whole gives the impression that musicians and engineers had just discovered a musical event with which they were all equally elated. —P.H.R.

KEYBOARD

MOZART: *Sonata in D for 2 Pianos, K. 448*; *Theme and Variations for Piano 4 Hands, (K. 501)*; **SCHUBERT:** *Fantasia in F minor for Piano 4 Hands, Op. 103*; *Andantino Varie for Piano 4 Hands, Op. 84, No. 1*; Robert and Gaby Casadesu (duo-pianists). Columbia ML-5046, \$4.98.

▲AS a collection of music conceived for two pianists and one or two pianos, I don't know how you could better this selection. Mozart's *Sonata, K. 448* is generally recognized as his best work in this medium; Schubert's two representations are likewise considered. This should be a popular disc. It is well recorded for the most part, too, without the surplus of

resonance Columbia sometimes employs in its piano recordings. The Casadesuses are apt to rattle off their Mozart in somewhat unexpressive style, but otherwise their playing is excellent for its polished finish, its rhythmic exactitude. The same made be said of their Schubertian contributions, but here their treatment seems to become the music more. All the same, this listener should not want to part with Badura-Skoda and Demus' Westminster recording of the great *Fantasia*. —C.J.L.

SCARLATTI: *Sonatas in G, L. 302; in C, L. 458; in E, L. 257; in D mi.; L. Sup. 12, in D mi., L. 423; in B fl., L. Sup. 36; in C. L. Sup. 2; in G, L. 322; in F minor, L. 382; in C, L. Sup. 4; in G, L. 335; in A, L. Sup. 31.* Westminster WN- or SWN-18029, \$4.98 & \$3.98. *Sonatas in A mi., L. 140; in D, L. 109; in G, L. 349; in E, L. 21; in C, L. 255; in D mi., L. 266; in E mi., L. 22; in G, L. 288; in D, L. 308; in G mi., L. 13; in C, L. 5; in C mi., L. 356.* Westminster WN- or SWN-18068, \$4.98 & \$3.98. Fernando Valenti (harpsichord).

▲WITH these two discs, Valenti has recorded 120 of the 550 sonatas of Domenico Scarlatti—a project which he and Westminster plan to complete. It has been said that “with the possible exception of Clementi, Scarlatti is the most important keyboard composer Italy has contributed, and he is perhaps the only composer to be ranked with Mozart for the sense of pure enduring beauty as divorced from emotion or intellectuality. Like Mozart he practiced the rare art of amusing—rare, that is, on the high, pure plane whereon he moved; and again like Mozart he was able to turn the trick hundreds of times.” (Albert Lockwood)

Valenti has the nimble fingers and the accuracy to achieve the delicate bravura characteristics of these sonatas. He is especially successful in the works of rapid tempi and quite right in not sentimentalizing the ones in slower tempo. His handling of *Longo 21* in Volume 10 is a case in point—to have sentimentalized the slower sections here would have placed an unnecessary emphasis in contrast with the quicker sections. What Valenti does with *Longo 22* and *Longo 266* is sheer technical magic, as also is his handling of the subtle changes in *Longo 288*. These and other sonatas make Volume 10 an attractive program.

Volume 9 opens with the trumpet-like sonata, *Longo 302*, which Valenti plays with deftly nimble fingers. *Longo 458*, which follows, features a solo voice in an unusual way. *Longo 257*, next, is a lovely thing with “its genuinely haunting quality.” The coloration that the harpsichordist obtains here makes for welcome contrast. *Longo 423 in D minor*, an early piece despite its high number, is an exquisite little opus. Side 2 opens with an impressively majestic sonata, *Longo Sup.*

2, and contains *Longo 382 in F minor*, a delicately contemplative work which Valenti plays beautifully. The final sonata of this recital is indeed fanciful and quite delightful. The interested listener may find it difficult to make a choice between these two records. Westminster's fine engineering still continues to amaze your reporter. —P.H.R.

SCHUMANN: *Carnaval, Op. 9; Kreisleriana, Op. 16; Geza Anda (piano). Angel 35247, \$4.98 or \$3.48.*

▲IN NOVEMBER, Anda made his first New York appearances to anything but a rapturous press. It was conceded he had an enormous technical talent, that he was a “big” player; but his playing scarcely matched the level on which a few of his records have tarried. One immediately felt that an artistic authority of taste had supervised Anda's recordings, for one could not accept the incongruity of Anda's live performance of the *Carnaval* with his LPs of, let's say, the Brahms *Paganini Variations* or Bartók's pieces *For Children*. The *Carnaval*, in any event, is not Anda's dish of tea. And though his new recording is easily superior to the performance I heard at Town Hall, it is still in many ways willful and distorted in its mannered handling of rhythm, tempo rubato, and dynamics. Even on the record, to cite a few examples, *Pierrot* is inappropriately sentimentalized, *Harlequin* is heavy and sluggish, and the *Valse* is hardly noble but rather *sentimentale*. The *Kreisleriana* is misunderstood, I think. There is little real poetic afflatus in Anda's playing. The introspective pages tend to bog down through the absence of any rhythmic alacrity. The animated pages are given little shape and little that could be called brilliance. Overall, however, is a fine tone and regard for the piano that leads me to believe that Anda loves the piano more than Schumann. —C.J.L.

OPERA

MOZART: *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Comic Opera in 3 Acts); Singers—Maria Stader (Konstanze); Rita Streich (Blonda), Ernst Haefliger (Belmonte), Martin Vantin (Pedrillo), Josef Greindl (Osmin), Speaking Parts—Beate Guttmann (Konstanze), Sebastian Fischer (Belmonte), Wolfgang Spier (Pedrillo), Walter Frank (Selim), RIAS Symphony Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Ferenc Fricsay. Decca set DX-133, 2 discs, \$9.96.

▲THE overall brightness and clarity of the recording is in favor of this latest set of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*. Here the right amount of reverberation has been used to give equal clarity and weight to the orchestral music from basement to attic. While the singers have a realistic nearness, the balance effected between voices and orchestra is excellently

contrived. This is a Deutsche Grammophon recording which domestic Decca can justly be proud to distribute in this country.

The singers are well assigned, with especial honors going to Josef Greindl, as Osmin. Mr. Miller, writing in the *N. Y. Times* recently, rightfully contended that “Osmin, whose deep voice Mozart exploited to the full for his comedy purposes, must still be a human character, never descend to too broad burlesque. It is because Josef Greindl in the Decca set realizes this, whereas his counter is the weak spot in the earlier cast, even more than because of the better balanced recording, that the new Decca set, conducted by Ferenc Fricsay, is preferable to the London set.” Actually, the London set boasts two singers whom I admire more in their roles than the newer ones—Wilma Lipp, as Constance, and Walter Ludwig, as Belmonte. The latter is more masculine than his counterpart here, though the Swiss tenor, Ernst Haefliger, sings with comparable artistry. Maria Stader has a rather small voice for Constance, but her purity of tone and assured artistry make her more than acceptable on records. Lipp colored her tones more than Stader, though her voice could be regarded as lightweight for the role. Rita Streich is excellent as Blonda. It will be noted that she and Greindl were the only ones in the cast who did not have doubles for their speaking dialogue. But Emmy Loose was equally fine and, for those in the know, her long-breathed phrases in the aria, *Durch Zaerlichkeit*, are almost unbelievable. Martin Vantin is an improvement over Peter Klein as Pedrillo. So, the honors come out in favor for this new set, which has been effectively reduced to two instead of three discs. Fricsay does not efface memories of Krips' conducting, but with the light in his orchestral playing (brought about by the brighter recording) one feels that his part in the performance is best served. However, for all the rhythmic fluency of Fricsay, I miss the sparkle that Krips more buoyant tempi brought to Blonde's *Welche Wonne* and Pedrillo's *Frisch zum Kampf*. —P.H.R.

MOZART: *Die Zauberflöte*; Hilde Gueden (Pamina), Wilma Lipp (Queen of the Night), Emmy Loose (Papagena), Leopold Simoneau (Tamino), Kurt Boehme (Sarastro), Walter Berry (Papagena), Paul Schoeffler (Speaker), August Jaresch (Monostatos), Judith Hellwig, Christa Ludwig, Hilde Roessel-Majdan (Three Ladies), others, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, Vienna State Opera Chorus conducted by Karl Boehm. London set XLLA-33, 3 discs, \$12.96 (with score).

▲AS a recording, this latest contribution by London to the Mozart bicentenary is exceptionally fine—there is just the right amount of reverberation for clarity of line

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in the orchestra and the balance between voices and orchestra is near perfect. The Columbia set suffers from poor balance with the singers often hugging the microphone. This is an estimable performance, though it does not completely displace the old Victor set for as Mr. Miller has said, "Beecham's conception of the score is rightly acknowledged a classic, and in its day its recording was outstanding." One vainly wishes—as in so many rival operatic issues these days—that the virtues of both could be combined. Neither Boehm nor Karajan are the equal of Beecham in imagination, sensitivity or communicative power. The latter's tempi are always judiciously chosen. Boehm in this respect comes closest to him, and he of all three conductors deserves praise for his attention to the woodwind section of Mozart's orchestra.

Hilde Gueden, Emmy Loose and Wilma Lipp were also in the Columbia set. The first of these is the better Pamina, if not as pathetic as Lemnitz, and in her overall performance best in this release. Loose is a better Papagena than Beilke, and Wilma Lipp's Queen of the Night, brilliantly sung, is more exciting than Berger's. Of the three Taminos, Roswaenge's is the most heroic, Dermota's the most sentimental, and Simoneau's both manly and expressive. Of the three Papagenos, Huesch remains "unsurpassed". Yet, Kunz and Berry are equally good in their individual ways. Of the three Sarastros, Walter Ludwig is the most impressive. Neither Boehme nor Strienz achieve the true dignity that rightfully belongs to the character. Of the two, Boehme, with his rich low tones, is to be preferred. The three ladies are equally praiseworthy in all the sets, and so are the boys (though assigned to women singers) and the Armed Men. One feature of this set is the presence of Paul Schoeffler as the Speaker—a part in which he is the most impressive. All the music is recorded but the dialogues are omitted as usual. However, London supplies a vocal score with Prof. Edward Dent's fine translation which allows one to become familiar with the complete text at leisure. It is a pity the dialogue, a vital part of this opera, was not included to make this set a more lasting tribute to its composer. Be that as it may, it might prove disconcerting to more than one listener unfamiliar with the German language. —P.H.R.

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VERDI: *Aida* (complete); Maria Meneghini Callas (*Aida*), Fedora Barbieri (*Amneris*), Richard Tucker (*Rhadames*) Tito Gobbi (*Amonasro*), Giuseppe Modesti (*Ramfis*), Nicola Zaccaria (*King*), Franco Ricciardi (*Messenger*), Elvira Galassi (*Priestess*), Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Tullio Serafin. Angel set 3532, 3 discs, \$16.94 (with libretto) or \$10.44 (without).

▲**MARIA CALLAS** excels both vocally and dynamically, and in communication of text. She has the greatest fluency and color. She does not stretch out rapid passages as Tebaldi does and she has more flexibility than Milanov. She has developed a mezzo-voice which, while not as caressing as Tebaldi's or Milanov's, nevertheless permits her to achieve some lovely nuances. Like her contemporaries, she has some blatant and pinched upper tones that momentarily mar her expressive artistry. In *O patria mia*, her high C is a case in point that rules her singing of this aria out of court by comparison to Milanov's. Richard Tucker has grown in the role of Rhadames since his performance in the Toscanini broadcast. Tucker's controlled, dramatic performance and his communication of the text is better than his contemporaries. His *Celeste Aida* is marred by some scooping, but elsewhere he is excellent and consistently thrilling. He has learned to color his voice, with the result that in the lyrical passages of the third act, and the final scene, he is more impressive. He and Callas, by virtue of their communication of text, give one of the finest performances of the final scene to be heard on records. Tucker's voice requires no unnatural boost of sound as Bjorling's did, its quality is quite in keeping with that heard in the opera house. Yet, of all the Rhadames, del Monaco with his trumpet-like voice is closer to the type of tenor that Verdi had in mind, and at his best he is the most exciting.

It is Tullio Serafin who apparently inspires his artists, working with them and not against them. While the balancing of voices in this set are not as good as in the Victor set, the playing of the La Scala Orchestra and the singing of the chorus are more refined than the Rome ensembles. What Serafin accomplishes with artists is revealed in Callas' singing which is forthright, never suggesting restraint as it did in *Butterfly* with Karajan's more reserved conducting. Barbieri's performance of Amneris here is better than in the Victor set. Unquestionably, Serafin suggested her more sensitive singing in the opening scene of Act 2. Yet, for all her beauty of natural voice, Barbieri is not in the great tradition of singers of this role, since she does not always sustain a smooth line, being guilty of too much sliding from tone to tone. Gobbi, as Amonasro, does more with the words than Warren did, but he lacks the beauty of the latter's voice. He is at his best in the third act where he handles the rapid passages better than Warren, but the latter is more impressive in the Triumphant Scene of Act 2. Serafin is his usual authoritative self at the orchestral helm but he does not bring the excitement in external dramatic passages in the opening acts as Perlea does; however, he achieves nuances of line in lyrical passages that Perlea did not do. It takes Serafin two

acts to get into his stride but once he reaches the third act, the orchestra burns with a steady flame to the end of the opera. The secondary parts are better sung in the Victor set. Christoff and Clabassi are more impressive as Ramfis and the King than are Modesti and Zaccaria, and Bruna Rizzoli is a better Priestess than Elvira Galassi.

The recording is not as brilliant as in the Victor set, but there is more refinement in the lyrical passages and an overall realism that is satisfying. Obviously, the acoustical qualities of the La Scala and the Rome Opera Houses are markedly different. The latter has more reverberation, which can be both a help and a hindrance. —P.H.R.

VOICE

BOWLES: *A Picnic Cantata*; **POULENC:** *Sonata for Two Pianos* (1953); Arthur Gold and Robert Fizdale (pianos) and, in the latter, Gloria Davy and Martha Flowers (sopranos), Mareda Gaither (mezzo), Gloria Wynder (contralto), and Al Howard (drums). Columbia ML-5068, \$4.98.

▲**SOMEWHERE**, and I am sorry that I do not remember where, I have seen the Bowles work described as a sort of lower-case *Four Saints*. Succinctly, that is the size of it, although the implication of outright plagiarism is untoward. Thomson's opera was strictly one of a kind. Bowles, eschewing the exoticism that is his wont, has effected the same economy of means with a James Schuyler text, but the latter is far more comprehensible than Gertrude Stein's ever will be. It's all about how a quartet of young ladies spend a Sunday afternoon, and there is at no point any doubt as to what's happening. The open-eared will find it, I am sure, utterly charming, and every bit as sophisticated as the benighted semantics of its alleged model. The singers herewith are all of them fine; I am especially happy to see that someone has discovered the exceptional talents of Martha Flowers. The percussioning of Al Howard is commendably unobtrusive. The pianists are, as we have come to expect of these sterling artists, completely sold on the music and determined to sell the listener if they possibly can. I am not persuaded that the overside *Sonata* is more than predictably Poulencish, but that in no way precludes its being greeted with open arms because the two-piano repertory still is a bit of a junk yard and it needs a few more pieces of such quality as this, so expertly tailored. Bright, somewhat brassy sound. —J.L.

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BRAHMS: *Liebesslieder Walzer, Op. 52*; *Neue Liebesslieder, Op. 65*; Elisabeth Roon (soprano), Maria Nussbaumer (contralto), Murray Dickie (tenor), Norman Foster (basso), with Joseph and Grete Dichler (pianos) and Aka-

demie Kammerchor, conducted by Ferdinand Grossmann. Vox PL 9460, \$5.95.

▲**BRAHMS'** two sets of *Lovesongs*, designated for piano duo with vocal quartet *ad lib*, are generally given by a solo group or else by a chorus. This latest version combines the two styles, with the soloists carrying most of the burden, the chorus supplying variety in the larger-scaled movements. Passages for one solo voice are generally repeated by a unison group. On the whole this seems to me the best performance on LP, for the intonation is better than that on the Oceanic disc made in Stuttgart, and the spirit is more properly Viennese than that of the Boulanger group in the *Neue Liebeslieder* issued by Decca. It still does not efface memories of the first set sung by Seefried, Hoengen, Meyer-Welfing and Hotter, in a pre-LP recording never released in this country. Certain things about the new set could be better: Roon's voice is marred by unsteadiness in her solos, for example, and Dickie's tone is noticeably less telling than those of his companions, so that the tenor part is sometimes all but lost. But the spirit of the ensemble is good, and Brahms's melodies sing out blithely. —P.L.M.

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BRITTEN: *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne; Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo;* Alexander Young (tenor) and Gordon Watson (piano). Westminster-Argo SNW-18077, \$4.98 or \$3.98.

▲**LAST** month, in reviewing the *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* coupled with the cycle *Winter Winds*, I said that I could imagine no singer better suited to sing these cycles than Peter Pears. Of course, Pears has been long closely associated with Benjamin Britten and there is an artistic understanding between them that leaves little to be desired. Yet, Alexander Young and Gordon Watson are equally praiseworthy in the Michelangelo songs if they do not quite have the inner spark that seems to pass back and forth between Pears and Britten. Young has a less impersonal voice than Pears, more beauty of tone and virility that are in his favor. Watson is an excellent pianist but he is not as close to the heart of either cycle as Britten I. The *Holy Sonnets of John Donne* own a dramatic intensity and passionate fervor in contrast to the lyrical qualities of the Michelangelo sonnets. Britten wrote them in 1945 while on a bed of high fever, after returning from a tour of German concentration camps with Menuhin, whom he accompanied. The theme of these works is death, and though Britten had planned them some time before, one wonders what his illness did to heighten the inspiration. As one reviewer in England has said, they "are declaimed at a pitch of almost fevered excitement." These are strong works, ingeniously written, offering an unusual experience in the annals of English art songs. The recording

here is exceptionally well balanced, quite as fine as that in London's recent disc. —P.H.R.

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CONCERT OF SACRED MUSIC: The Mormon Tabernacle Choir of Salt Lake City conducted by J. Spencer Cornwall, with Alexander Schreiner and Frank W. Asper (organs). Columbia ML-5048, \$4.98.

▲**ELEVEN** works are offered: Cyril Jenkins' *Light in Darkness, Lead Kindly Light, Fierce Raged the Tempest and Weep You No More, Sad Fountains*; the same composer's arrangements of Brahms' *Sapphic Ode* and Purcell's *Nymphs and Shepherds*; the Liszt-Philip James *Ave Verum*; Elgar's *As Torrents in Summer*; R. Nathaniel Dett's *Listen to the Lambs*; J. F. Bridge's setting of Purcell's *Thy Word Is a Lantern*; and *How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place* from the *German Requiem* of Brahms. Those thousands who own previous recordings by this unique 375-voice body will need no urging to acquire the latest sequel. Others are warmly commended to sample one or another of these discs. The sound, emanating from the Choir's home base, is simply stunning. All acoustical engineers should be required to visit the Mormon Tabernacle before hanging out their shingles. —J.L.

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DEBUSSY: *La Damselle Elue*; **BERLIOZ:** *Les Nuits d'Été, Op. 7*; Victoria de los Angeles (soprano) with Carol Smith (contralto) and the Radcliffe Choral Society (in the former), Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Charles Munch. RCA Victor 1907, \$3.98.

▲**WONDERFUL** reproduction with that atmospheric character that distinguishes RCA Victor's adroit engineering of the Boston Symphony. Victoria de los Angeles sings the Debussy music with lovely tone, but she does not quite efface memories of Micheau and Gorge. Of the three sopranos, Gorge makes the *Damselle* seem less of a pallid light in the Elysian firmament, and both she and Micheau have assisting artists who are better suited to this essentially French music. The orchestral playing is very beautiful, yet, for all his detailed care and devotion, Munch does not quite achieve the subtleties, coloration and ardor of musical phrasing that Inghelbrecht does. In the songs of Berlioz, Miss de los Angeles sings with tonal warmth, beauty, and a purity of classical line rare indeed among present-day singers. No one who owns the two songs that Maggie Teyte recorded will part with them, for they have a warmth and subtle coloration that no other singer to date has equalled. Of the two previous cycles by Danco and Steber, a choice may be governed by the recording. The Danco record suffers from the use of the echo chamber, which makes the violins uncomfortably near to her lovely tone,

while the Steber disc has better balanced sound. But Mitropoulos is not as close to the heart of this music as Munch, who provides Miss de los Angeles with the loveliest sounding accompaniments. Decision may be governed by discmates. In the case of the Berlioz, I favor Steber, who has given us a valued collection of Berlioz songs which, for some strange reason, is not listed in the Schwann catalogue. It, too, belongs under *Nuits d'Été*. —P.H.R.

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DEBUSSY: *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*; Claudine Collart (soprano), Janine Collard (mezzo-soprano), Christiane Gayraud (mezzo-soprano), André Falcon (narrator), Chorus of Radiodiffusion and Télévision Française; and Champs Elysées Orchestra, conducted by D. E. Inghelbrecht. London Ducret-Thomson DTL 93040-41, 2 discs, \$9.96.

▲**FOR** a long-neglected work, this D'Annunzio-Debussy "mystery" composed for the dancer Ida Rubinstein, has been remarkably well served by the recorders. The first version, made in Oklahoma, caused a respectable stir in its day, and was not too easily superseded by the excellent and genuinely French performance under Ansermet issued by London. The prime feature of the new version is its completeness, for unlike the others it includes the spoken lines of the drama, recited with exalted expressiveness by André Falcon. Beyond this, the recording boasts the finest solo singing yet offered and reproduction at the least as good as that accorded Ansermet. Collart's voice is warmer than Danco's, and she is an equally proficient artist. The team-work of the two mezzos is excellent, their voices rich and attractive. With all this, Inghelbrecht's reading of the score is beautifully sensitive. The work is long and pretty much on a level (one wonders how it would stand up in the theatre) but it does not fall apart in this performance. The difference in timing made by the inclusion of the spoken lines is indicated by the fact that this recording requires four sides as opposed to two in both the earlier versions. —P.L.M.

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ELGAR: *The Dream of Gerontius* (complete); Richard Lewis (tenor), Marjorie Lewis (mezzo), John Cameron (bass), and the Huddersfield Choral Society and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Sir Malcolm Sargent. Angel set 3543-B or discs 35285/6, \$9.96 or \$6.96.

▲**THE** estimable Percy Young, in a new study published by Collins (Macmillan), refers to this work as "the supreme expression of Elgar's deep Catholic convictions". This seems to me an understatement. The composer himself wrote on the last page of his autograph manuscript "This is the best of me." Notwithstanding the concertos and the ever fascinating

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Enigma Variations, one is impelled to concur. No, compelled would be the better word, for this haunting score does not merely invite the listener to savor its very special essence; given the requisite receptivity it can overwhelm, transport, even transfigure the sensibilities. The text is of course the famous poem of Cardinal Newman, so that the work is not so much an oratorio or a cantata as it is a setting, pure and simple. And never did those hackneyed adjectives serve more appropriately, for this is the purest and simplest testament of faith in modern music. I say modern. Actually the piece was written in 1900. But there can be no element of time in our appraising this work. Objectively, yes, it is *fin-de-siècle* and otherwise Elgarian as to style. But everyone must surrender to it subjectively if they are to perceive its subtle splendors, and by that I mean no compromise with denominational convictions because this is ecumenical music if ever there can be any such. I have gone on so, lest you overlook this issue, that there is no space left in which to discuss the performance and recording. Both are exemplary, however, and it remains only to express thanks and congratulations to the conductor, whose 60th birthday is commemorated by this extraordinarily welcome present to us all.

—J.L.

SPIRITUALS: *Ezekiel saw de Wheel; Deep River; I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray; There is a Balm in Gilead; Hail Mary; I've Been 'Buked; Behold the Star; Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit; Were You There?; I Want to Be Ready; Listen to the Lambs; Ain-a That Good News?; Mary Had a Baby; King Jesus Is a-Listening; Rockin' Jerusalem; Tuskegee Institute Choir, conducted by William L. Dawson. Westminster WN 18080, \$4.98 or \$3.98.*

▲THE PRESENT Tuskegee Choir is a virtuoso group of impressive abilities, though for the most part they sing their spirituals in a manner to preserve their simplicity and suggest their setting as part of religious services. An air of spontaneity enlivens most of their singing. *Deep River*, as we hear it from this recording, is profoundly reverent and moving, while

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit is full of exaltation. There are occasional solo descants, as in *Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray*, quite in the spirit of the camp meeting. Once in a while, as in *Listen to the Lambs*, Mr. Dawson's arrangement blossoms into a full-fledged composition—in this case really an anthem—but even so the singing never altogether loses its elemental quality. The diction of the group is altogether admirable.

—P.L.M.

Correspondence

Dear Mr. Varkonyi:

I have read with interest your articles on the building of a loudspeaker enclosure. The only thing in which I disagree with the design is in the use of electrolytic condensers for the dividing network. The use of this type of condenser is not advised in high class work according to most authorities, because the capacitance of the electrolytic condenser varies continuously with frequency, voltage and other factors. I have built many dividing networks with crossovers from 300 cycles up to 5,000 cycles and have always used oil-filled and paper with excellent results. The only reason I can see for using electrolytics is their low cost.

Very truly yours,
David Fonseca
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Dear Mr. Fonseca:

I am grateful for your letter since it brings up a prejudice which I may well have discussed in my article regarding the crossover network.

I do not question the quality of your networks using oil filled condensers. I do wish to state, however, that the network described in the ARG (July issue) is equal to one using such condensers. Your statement that electrolytic condensers vary in capacitance with frequency voltage etc. is true. You might add temperature and time to the list. To be scientifically exact the following variations in capacity have been noted in embossed dry electrolytic condensers from 50 to 10,000 cps—42% to 85%. However, we are concerned with the capacity at and around the crossover frequency, in this case 300 cps. In this range, the variation is less than one per cent, resulting in an immeasurable shift in the crossover. It is obvious that frequencies considerably above or below this are not affected because they are beyond the attenuation band.

Electrolytic condensers have also been blamed for rectification resulting in peak-clipping. However, tests by one of our largest loudspeaker manufacturers and extensive tests made by myself have

found no trace of this. Electrolytics do have wide variation in capacity and also lose capacity with age. In the single series filter described in my article a 50% change would result in a crossover change which would be less than 25 cps. I do not think anyone could differentiate between a 300 and a 325 cps crossover.

In parallel type and multisection filters, variation in capacitance is another matter. Here, reasonable accuracy is essential. In the parallel type, it is conceivable that a hump or valley may result in the transmission characteristic if the low frequency speaker is not tuned exactly to the same crossover as the mid-range unit. In multi-section filters considerable loss in attenuation may occur if all sections are not accurately tuned.

I would suggest that you build two networks as described, using electrolytics in one and oil filled condensers in the other. Check for frequency shift and distortion on meters, make AB listening tests not knowing which network he is listening to. The results might be surprising and he might be richer in the future.

Experts very often remain experts because they say nothing controversial, and there is no danger in recommending oil-filled condensers. But remember the good Samaritan. It is not enough to do no wrong, and it is far better to improve a situation at a risk. In this case, the risk of criticism is well taken since the electrolytics used, as recommended, are equal in performance to the oil filled variety and are less bulky; also they are easier to obtain and cheaper.

Sincerely yours,
George F. Varkonyi

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